

The Danger of Anger

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 September 2019

Preacher: Fred Stone

- [0 : 00] Have you been angry this week? Some people would say it's a normal week, wasn't it? Why were you angry? Was it justified?
- Was it righteous anger? Or, would you have to say, mine was not justified?
- Or even if it was the way I expressed it. Was not right. Now, all anger is not sinful.
- There's some things we should be angry about. There's things that makes God angry. As you can read in the scripture. Jesus expressed righteous anger on more than one occasion.
- One of the most well known is when he cleansed the temple. Because people had failed to honor it as the house of God. And the place of prayer that it was supposed to be.
- [1 : 06] So, Jesus sets an example. Anger is a normal human emotion. It can be good. It can be justified.
- But we've got to be very careful the way that we express it. But I know that most of us in this room, if we're honest, most of our anger is not righteous anger.
- Most anger that we see, most anger that we express, is sinful anger. And we really can't, before God, justify it.
- Jerry Bridges says that the three top causes of sinful anger are pride, selfishness, and the desire to control. Now, those are broad headings. A lot of things could fall under that.
- But pride, selfishness, and a desire to control. Doesn't that describe a lot of the reasons why you lose it, blow up?
- [2 : 18] Bridges goes on to describe sinful anger as a universal problem. Look at it. No one is isolated from its presence or immune from its poison.
- It permeates each person and spoils our most intimate relationships. Anger is a given part of our fallen human fabric. Sadly, it is true even in our Christian homes and churches.
- Anger is often directed toward those we should love most. Our spouse, children, parents, or siblings in our human families, and those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ in our church families.
- What he says there at the top of that paragraph, that's painfully true, isn't it? Our anger is most often directed toward those we should love the most.
- And we're going to see in Jonah chapter 4 this morning, Jonah's anger was directed at the one he should have loved more than anyone or anything.
- [3 : 28] God. Today, we're going to focus on the danger of anger as seen in Jonah's anger toward God.
- Read with me if you would. We're going to be in Jonah chapter 4, beginning in verse 1. Just look at four verses today. If you weren't here last week and you aren't familiar with the story, what happens leading up to chapter 4, verse 1, Jonah preached a message of judgment, condemnation to the people of Israel and warned them in 40 days, God's judgment's going to fall.

Well, they believed it. They believed God. And they truly repented of their sin and God relented. God said, no, I'm not going to destroy them because they've turned from their sin.

Here's how Jonah responds. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly. And he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country?

That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish. For I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and relenting from disaster.

[4 : 50] Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me. For it is better for me to die than to live. And the Lord said, do you do well to be angry?

The danger of anger. Why is anger dangerous? We see in verse 1, anger sometimes leads us to find fault with God.

That's what's happening here. Look at that verse again. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. NIV says, but to Jonah, this seemed very wrong.

He became angry. That word anger there is talking about burning with anger, seething with anger.

Old Testament commentator Joyce Baldwin explains the intensity of Jonah's displeasure and anger. Look at it. The very strong expression indicates that Jonah's anger welled up from the depths of his being, like a child throwing a temper tantrum.

[6 : 01] Such anger is totally irrational, and yet it must have an explanation. Jonah's anger does have an explanation. He is angry because God was gracious and merciful to the people of Nineveh and decided to not destroy them after they had demonstrated repentance.

That's what we looked at last week in chapter 3. Now in chapter 4, I want you to think about it. Jonah is angry because God did not destroy, wipe out an entire city of people, men, women, and children.

Now why did Jonah think like this? Why did he want all these people to die?

Why did he want God's judgment to fall? Well, the book of Jonah does not give us one specific reason, but we can identify a few things based on what we've already seen in Jonah, based on what we know about Israel, where he is from, and Assyria.

Nineveh is located. It's a major city in Assyria. I want to use Jerry Bridges' causes of anger to see how Jonah's anger, what caused it, what it was.

[7 : 31] Number one, Jonah's anger was prideful. Jonah had the wrong kind of national pride. You see, Jonah had the idea, God's grace, God's mercy, it's for the people of Israel.

It's for his chosen people only. He thought because he was a Jew, one of God's chosen ones, part of that nation, that made him special in God's eyes.

And it was people like Jonah who could expect God to be merciful and gracious, not those other people.

It wasn't that Jonah thought he was perfect, it's that Jonah just thought, I'm not like these pagan people. I'm a sinner, but not that kind of sinner.

He was prideful. He had the wrong kind of national pride. We can do that as well. Jonah was also selfish. If you know the story, Jonah had experienced God's grace and mercy after he had intentionally disobeyed God, tried to get away from God, refused to answer God's call to go and preach to this people.

[8 : 49] Well, God pursued Jonah, didn't kill him, but saved him from death, saved him from death by drowning. And in Jonah chapter two, he writes a psalm of thanks, praising God.

So Jonah, he understands God's mercy. He has received God's mercy, but he didn't want these people. He didn't want them to have anything like it.

Jonah was like the man in Jesus' parable in Matthew 18. I want to encourage you to read that sometime. A lot of times it's called the parable of the unmerciful servant. There was a guy, a servant, who owed a tremendous debt to a king.

It was like a multimillion dollar debt, something he would never be able to pay. Well, the king in the story, just out of mercy, chose to forgive the debt.

Just wipe the slate clean. You can imagine how thankful he was. What if tomorrow you got a call from the bank and they say your house, what you owe in your house, has been wiped clean.

[10 : 04] That'd be something to be excited about, wouldn't it? Just forgiven. Well, this guy took God's forgiveness, the king's forgiveness, went out and found someone who just owed him a little bit.

Something that the man could have repaid, but this man was such a selfish, whatever he was.

I can't imagine the mentality. He demanded he get paid those few dollars now, or he was going to have the man put in prison for not paying his debts. The man couldn't pay, and so he had him put in prison.

So heartless, so just a short memory, didn't he? Jesus tells the parable to let us see what it's like for us, what it looks like to God for us to be selfish when he forgives us such a great debt.

We ought to be willing to forgive others. When we experience God's mercy, we ought to be willing to show mercy to others. But there's another thing that Jonah demonstrates that I want to spend a little time on.

[11 : 12] This is the real focus. Jonah's problem was he had a desire to control, and what he wanted to control was God. Jonah wanted to control when God was gracious and when God demanded justice.

Now, let's be fair to Jonah and look at it from his perspective. Jonah's thinking is really not irrational. Jonah knew that the people of Nineveh, Assyrians, they were notoriously brutal, cruel.

They were truly, from all historical accounts, they were evil people that if anybody deserved to be annihilated, they did. Plus, they were the enemy of Israel.

They were not only such ruthless people, but in time, the way things were headed, they were going to destroy God's chosen people, the northern kingdom of Israel.

And so, from Jonah's perspective, because of who they were and how evil they were, and the fact that they were the enemies of God's chosen people, he thought God ought to kill them.

[12 : 27] Every one of them. They deserved it. That would be justice. Jonah could not just, he just kind of, could not imagine how God could allow such evil and violence to go unpunished.

Now, think about it. Jonah was angry because God had not met his expectations of justice. Jonah had these certain expectations about justice.

He shouldn't receive justice. He ran from God. He disobeyed God. He shook his fist in God's face in effect in chapter one, but God was merciful to him. That was okay.

But these other people, they better get justice. And when they didn't, when they got grace instead, Jonah is angry.

Now, I want you to think, isn't that a part of our sinful anger? God doesn't meet our expectations of justice or fairness.

[13 : 43] Do you ever think that God has not been just or fair by not giving you a better job, a better house, a better spouse?

You ever think God has not been fair to you because you know people who are more talented than you? You know people who are better at music than you. You know people who are better athletes than you.

They don't work as hard as you. They're just better. They have more. They can do it better than you. Sometimes, don't we think that God has just been totally unfair unfair in giving this better thing, this better situation to someone that, at least from our perspective, they don't deserve it.

They don't deserve it, but we do. Whenever we think like this, we need to understand that we're angry at God for being God, for being in control, for choosing to do what He does.

When we think like this, we're really being angry at God because we don't like the way He's running the world. We don't like the way He's running our lives.

[15 : 07] We think we could do it better. Sometimes, we're angry because we can't control God. We can't control what God's will is for us and maybe some people around us.

The question I want us to think about is this. Do you really want to live life this way? None of us would say this, but there may be some anger and frustration in you right now because you feel like you've not been treated fairly by this person or that group or in that situation and you look around and you see people who have gotten more than they should and the truth is they've been treated graciously.

Bottom line, you're angry at God at His sovereignty, at the fact that He's in control and He's doing that.

He's allowing that. I don't want to go through life that way and just become more angry and bitter and I certainly don't want to stand before God on Judgment Day with that attitude.

You really and truly want to go through life being angry and displeased like Jonah, being frustrated because you can't control God.

[16 : 37] life will be just much better, much more relaxed if we'll accept the fact that God is not only in control but He is working everything out according to His good plan because He is a good God.

That doesn't just include the world around about us, that includes our individual lives. You know, all of us could benefit from beginning each day with a prayer like this, Lord, help me to know and do Your will and trust that You're always the best way for me and my family.

Think about it. What would life be like if we could begin each day and just think about it all through the day? Talking to God, Lord, help me to truly desire to know Your will, to do it, and trust that it is the best possible way for me in my job, on my team, in my home, because Your will is always, as the Scripture says, good and acceptable and perfect.

Well, Jonah shows us another way or another reason why we should understand that anger is dangerous. Anger often leads us to justify our sinful behavior. Look at verse 2 again.

Jonah is really now telling God not only why he's angry, but why he did what he did at the beginning of the story. And he prayed to the Lord and said, verse 2, O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country?

[18 : 18] That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish. For I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.

This is the reason Jonah ran to start with from God's call to go and preach to Nineveh. He knew that if he went and preached, God would graciously respond to those people by not destroying them if they repented.

And Jonah didn't want to have any part in that. Understand here, Jonah is trying to justify his original sin of running from God by saying, God, I knew You were going to be gracious and merciful and loving and relent if I went.

It's hard to believe somebody could think like that. It's hard to believe that a believer like Jonah, a prophet like Jonah could believe like that, could think that way. But he not only thought that, he said that.

And he complained to God about that. Jonah. Now I want you to understand, and we've talked about this, as we go through Jonah, Jonah's us.

[19 : 36] We're Jonah. We have some of the same thoughts and attitudes and do some of the things, same things he did. What we see in Jonah just shows us how dangerous our anger can be.

And you think about it. How often do you try to justify your anger by blaming someone or something? You lose your temper at home and you try to justify it by blaming your spouse, blaming your child, blaming your parent, blame your cat.

You'd never blame a dog, but you would blame a cat. You get angry at work, but it's never your fault. It's the people you have to work with. It's the boss. It's the unrealistic expectations of your company.

You get mad at school, lose your temper, blame your teacher, blame another student, blame the excessive schoolwork.

One of the hard truths about anger is that no one can truly make us angry. Your spouse does not make you angry.

[20 : 53] angry. Your boss does not make you angry. Your parent doesn't make you angry. Anger cannot be forced upon us.

Now, people and things can create circumstances where our anger is aroused. It's part of who we are. It's part of our emotional makeup. Anger is an emotion that originates from within.

Anger is really an internal reaction to outside events. Jesus described really the fact that whatever comes out of us, attitude, words, actions, whatever comes out in our emotions like anger, it originates from within.

Look at what he said in Luke 6. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart. And the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart.

For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. Out of the overflow of his prideful, selfish, wanting to be in control heart, his anger comes.

[22 : 07] Jonah was angry because of the hatred within him toward the people of Nineveh. The displeasure, the anger that came out of Jonah, it originated in his own heart.

And we need to understand that and accept that. The displeasure and anger that comes out in our attitudes, in our words, and in our actions, it comes from within.

So we need to quit blaming other people. We need to quit trying to justify ourselves, our sinful, angry behavior as if we're not responsible.

He, she made me do it. They didn't. Let's look at one more example of the danger of anger seen in Jonah. Anger sometimes leads us to feel sorry for ourselves.

Look at verse 3. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me for it is better for me to die than to live. Jonah's anger over God's not doing what he wanted him to results in now he's feeling sorry for himself.

[23 : 27] He's having a pity party. He's saying he wants to give up on life. Now it's doubtful that he really truly wants to die because he's talked like that before. He's acted that way before as we've seen.

And when it came time to die, drown in the ocean, he didn't want to. He's just feeling sorry for himself here and he's whining.

Next week we're going to see that gets worse. We'll continue on in chapter four next week. But right now, Pastor Eric Redmond describes how Jonah's feeling sorry for himself escalated and it drove him to the point of talking about ending his life.

Look at what Redmond says. When things do not turn out as we desire them to, we then find ourselves in truth angry with the will of God for our lives.

It is then that we, like Jonah, run the gamut of feelings from a simple pity party, woe is me, to depression, where we don't even feel like getting up most days.

[24 : 36] From there we slide to despondency, where we check out mentally and emotionally from a relationship. And then to despair, where we can't see anything good at all.

Finally, if we do not realize the downward emotional cycle, we can land at Jonah's death wish because we can see no way to make life fair.

And so we say, God, it would be better if I were dead. Now, Redmond is not saying that anger is the only source of depression and despair.

Emotional struggles are complicated. It could be traced to many sources, some hard to identify. But anger can be one source, especially unresolved anger.

What Redmond is saying and what Jonah demonstrates is that sinful anger does not just hurt our relationship with God and our relationship with other people.

[25 : 43] Sinful anger hurts us. Unresolved sinful anger can have a harmful effect on many aspects of our lives.

Some people can't sleep. Some people have no appetite because of their unresolved anger. anger. Some people, it affects the way they feel, the way they think, the way they look at life.

That's why we need to learn to deal with anger quickly and decisively. As soon as it rears up its ugly head, we need to deal with it.

Now, one final thing. Is your anger dangerous? Is your anger dangerous? I want you to look at what the Lord asked Jonah in verse 4.

And the Lord said, Do you do well to be angry? New American Standard says, the Lord said, Do you have good reason to be angry? Then IV says, But the Lord replied, Is it right for you to be angry?

[26 : 54] The point is, Jonah needed to think. And so, it lets us. Do you have a reason to be angry if you're angry this morning? Did you have a reason to be angry this past week?

Think about what usually triggers your anger. Think about how you are usually angry. Is it justified? Is the way you express it right, correct, helpful?

All anger is not wrong, as we said earlier. We've got to be careful, even when our anger is right, it is justified that we express it in an appropriate and right way.

But if you know your anger is wrong, you know your anger is sinful anger, I want to encourage you right now to do three things. Number one, confess it and repent of it as the sin that it is against God.

God, and one of the favorite verses for all of us should be a promise that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

[28 : 06] You can be forgiven of that attitude, of those words, of those actions before God. But if it involves another person, once you confess it to God, you need to go to that person and confess it to them.

That's sometimes all, that's always a lot harder than talking to God about it. But you need to do that. You need to seek reconciliation with those you have wronged through your unjust anger.

Number two, trust that God is sovereign. Stop blaming people and circumstances for your anger. Trust that God is working everything out in this world according to His good purpose.

in people's lives around you and in your life. You be responsible. You make wise decisions, but trust that God is truly in control.

As Paul tells us in Romans 8, 28, a lot of people in this room would say, this is my favorite verse, most helpful verse in all of the Bible. And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him, who've been called according to His purpose.

[29 : 15] Number three, ask God to help you to grow in love for other people. A lot of our anger issues involve other people.

Well, love will help us. Look at this. Love will help us not be as easily offended. First Corinthians 13, love is not easily angered.

You know, we live in a world where everybody's offended. Everybody's offended. That irritates you, doesn't it? It irritates me. Are you one who's easily offended?

Do you walk around with a chip on your shoulder? The least little word, the least little look, it offends you. And you let people know by what you say back to them, by what you say behind their back, maybe.

Love will help us to not be so easily offended. Number two, love will help us to overlook a lot of things. We need to learn to overlook a lot of things.

[30 : 27] I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings here. I don't want this to sound too smart-alecky, but if it is, it is. Sometimes when we are offended, think we're being offended, the person really didn't mean it.

The person doesn't care enough about us to hurt us, to offend us. Sometimes, I really do think sometimes we as individuals, a lot of us have some paranoia.

Most people don't notice us. Most people don't care. Most people are just living their life. And along the way, some people might accidentally say or do something that you take offense to.

A lot of that stuff, overlook it. Forget it. Don't let it bother you. It doesn't bother me. Don't let it bother you.

Look at it. Above all, love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins. If you love somebody, you don't have a chip on your shoulder around them. If you love somebody, you'll give them the benefit of the doubt.

[31 : 40] If you love somebody, you'll let it go when it's just some kind of something that doesn't matter. One other. Love will help us to forgive and forget. When I say forget, it means not recall it, not bring it back up.

Love keeps no record of wrongs. Anger is a normal human emotion and we all have it. Some express it more than others, but we all have to deal with it. Until the day we die, we're going to have to deal with our anger.

What I want us to do as we close here, we need to pray that God will help us. Help us to control our anger and not let our anger control us.

Let's pray. Dear God, help us all to see how we need to respond to this message.

Because we all know to some degree of the danger of anger. Lord, you are, you are able to make it clear to every person.

[32 : 51] Help every person in this room to, to want to hear you, to want to deal properly with their anger, to not be like Jonah in any way like this.

So show everyone what they need to do. Confess sin, trust you, grow in their love. And you just do that as we have an attitude of prayer.

And if I could pray with you during this time, I'd be happy to do right here at the front during the next few minutes. OK. There we go. Okay. Okay.