

IN YOUR ANGER DO NOT SIN:
THE PROPRIETY OF ANGER IN CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

BY
JACOB M. REICH

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

PROF. BILL J. TACKMIER, ADVISOR

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

MEQUON, WISCONSIN

SUBMITTED 22 FEBRUARY 2019

ABSTRACT

“In your anger, do not sin.” The apostle Paul quotes this verse from Psalm 4 in his letter to the Ephesians. Upon first glance at this verse, people might think Paul is too emotional, for he is asking them to do something impossible: to be angry, but not sin in that anger. Perhaps they know their own struggles with anger—or their sins in that anger—and they do not think they can experience righteous anger. But this thesis seeks to prove that it is possible for Christians to experience a righteous anger. This thesis begins with a psychological view of anger, namely, how it affects people physiologically and psychologically. It then moves onto both a Scriptural and theological view of anger, looking at what the inspired writers and Christian theologians say regarding anger. Finally, it concludes with a close look at biblical examples of anger, from which encouragements and cautions about handling anger can be made.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
PART 1: A BACKGROUND ON ANGER	3
A Psychological View of Anger	3
How does anger affect us psychologically?	3
How do these psychological changes affect us and our actions?	5
A Scriptural View of Anger	13
What the inspired writers say about anger	13
How God views and uses anger	16
Psalm 4 – An Exegetical Study	19
Ephesians 4 – An Exegetical Study	22
A Theological View of Anger	25
How Lutherans view anger	25
How the Catholic Church views anger	28
A Few Other Christian views on anger	29
Can Christians Have Righteous Anger?	31
PART II: ANGER—PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS	34
Anger Applied, Part I: Biblical Case Studies	34
Moses: A Mixed Bag of Emotion	34
Samson: Righteous Anger or Irked Pride?	37
Saul: Offended by God’s Enemies	39
David: Defending God’s Honor	40

	4
Jesus: The Perfect Model	41
Anger Applied, Part II: Lessons for Us	43
Encouragements for Handling Anger	43
Cautions for Handling Anger	44
CONCLUSION	46
BIBLIOGRAPHY	47

INTRODUCTION

Think back to the last time you became angry. What was it that provoked you to anger? Did a loved one perhaps say or do something that just rubbed you the wrong way? Did something happen that you were not able to control and thus completely messed up your routine or plans? How did your anger express itself? Maybe it started off as a small feeling of annoyance or tension. Then, as everything unfolded, it started to develop further. It soon became an increase of your blood pressure as the annoyance started to fester and grow. That annoyance just kept growing even more until, finally, you exploded and spoke some hurtful words to your loved one or retaliated with a self-satisfying action.

But, after that event was over and some time had passed, how did you feel then? Did you feel good about yourself, knowing that your actions helped to clear that tension within you? Or did you feel remorse, realizing your anger got the better of you, and in the process you did more hurt and wrong than good?

We experience those guilty feelings after we have been angry because we think anger is something very bad. We perceive anger to be an out-of-place emotion, something we do not want to experience because it always seems to lead to some destructive word or action. As Christians, we particularly think about the various sins we have committed in our anger, and it leaves us frustrated and disappointed with ourselves, knowing we have offended God with our anger. With this mindset, it is no wonder we view anger as something bad.

But the apostle Paul turns our heads when he writes in Ephesians 4, “In your anger do not sin” (Eph 4:26 NIV 2011).¹ These words are not Paul’s own original idea—he is really quoting from Psalm 4, where the Holy Spirit inspired King David to write that verse. It would appear,

¹ All Scripture passages quoted from this point onward in this paper shall come from the NIV 2011 translation.

then, that David and Paul are advocating that Christians can be angry but not use that anger in sinful ways. This now raises the question: is it possible for Christians to experience a good, righteous anger, or do they experience only sinful, selfish anger?

With this thesis, I propose that Christians can, indeed, experience a good, righteous anger, particularly when used in response to sin. This thesis will be split into two major parts. The first part will begin with a study of the psychological workings of anger. This study will examine how anger, in general, affects every human and their actions done in that anger. Flowing right out of this will be a Scriptural/theological study of anger. This will address what God and his inspired writers say about anger, as well as examine what our Lutheran dogmaticians and other Christian theologians/writers say about the matter. At that point, some conclusions about anger will be made.

The second part of this thesis will offer some practical application of the conclusions on anger. The application will first be made to a number of biblical case studies, examining several notable biblical figures and their use of anger. After studying those figures, application can then be made to us in the 21st century, namely, those encouragements and cautions we must take in determining if we are experiencing good, righteous anger.

PART I: ANGER – A BACKGROUND STUDY

A Psychological Look at Anger

Looking at anger from a psychological perspective and understanding is critical to understanding anger from a theological perspective. How does anger come about? What can spark anger into a raging fire? What are some of the physical/emotional/physiological ways anger affects us? This study can broaden our understanding of anger in a general way and help us to see anger in a theological light.

How does anger affect us psychologically?

“I do not know where that came from.” We might have said that at one time or another, especially when describing why we became angry at someone or something. Anger could be the emotion we do not experience too often, but when we do experience it, we genuinely scare ourselves because we do not understand how it flared up. Is there a genetic/biological factor that contributes to anger?

Dr. Carol Tavris conducted a study of anger in the early 1980s. She notes how the study of the physiology of anger picked up at her time as more modern equipment, such as chemical assays, EEGs, etc., have been developed. With this new equipment, Tavris explains,

Some researchers seek the genetic origin of temperament. Others try to pinpoint the neural circuits of the brain that stimulate anger and violence, or to locate the “master switch” to aggression. Some construct ingenious experiments to reproduce real-life emotions in the laboratory, where blood pressure, heart rate, sweat, skin temperature, attitudes, and lip chewing can be measured.²

Before the advancement of modern technology, researchers could only conduct experiments where they relied on the answers of their test subjects. Now, this new equipment aids them in pinpointing and deducing how anger (and all emotions, for that matter) become triggered.

² Carol Tavris, *Anger: the Misunderstood Emotion* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 69.

In her study, Tavis discovered and posits four possible causes for what makes anger so violent. Two of these causes were allergies or brain disease. For some people, having an allergic reaction to a certain type of food could be enough to send them into a rage. But it is not always easy tracking down the specific food allergy, as several symptoms of the allergy might cluster together and make it tough to pinpoint the specific allergy.³ While researching brain allergies, Tavis happened upon brain diseases thought to cause anger and rage. This led her to discover studies done by Dorothy Lewis, who studied delinquent boys to figure out why they act in rage. Lewis' study showed those boys who experienced severe abuse from their parents tended to develop the same violent anger and aggression their parents showed.⁴

The next cause of anger Tavis proposes involves genetic makeup. A study done at the National Institute of Mental Health discovered that the enzyme monoamine oxidase (MAO), which circulates in the blood and the brain, can affect behavior in newborns. "Babies with low levels of MAO tend to be more excitable and crankier than babies with high levels," suggesting that MAO seems to provide a charge for anger.⁵ However, Tavis said that the level of MAO in one's biological system does not determine the rest of a person's genetic makeup. While genetics do contribute to emotion, the outside forces—habits someone learns, or the setting/culture they grow up in—produces a greater influence on their emotions, which would include how they handle anger.⁶

The final cause Tavis proposes for why anger is violent is adrenaline. When the body experiences an emotion, adrenaline is the fuel that sparks it. All emotions, anger included, are

³ Tavis, *Anger*, 71.

⁴ Dorothy Otnow Lewis, ed, *Vulnerabilities to Delinquency*, (New York: Spectrum Medieval and Scientific Books, 1981).

⁵ Tavis, *Anger*, 79.

⁶ Tavis, *Anger*, 82.

fueled by adrenaline, as adrenaline acts on all organs of the body. Tavis believes the amount of adrenaline in one's system could determine the level of the emotion they are feeling in the moment. This explains why some people may have a higher anger level than others. The adrenaline rush may be circulating so strongly that a person might be flooded with anger and thus is not able to completely control their anger. Tavis does concede, however, that attitude and experience may be what controls anger and other emotions, but her insight does explain how some people may feel out of control.⁷

Dr. LaVelle Hendricks, assistant professor of counseling at Texas A&M, also conducted a study of anger's psychological effects. He, like Tavis, discovered how the brain releases adrenaline during a fit of anger in order to control the heart rate and blood pressure.⁸ He also learned how the amygdala, located above the hypothalamus gland of the brain, is the emotional center of the brain. The amygdala provides the emotional response to a situation before the prefrontal cortex, the brain's thought center, provides the rationality of our actions. As Hendricks puts it, "The amygdala causes the brain to react to the threat or fear before the prefrontal cortex can consider the consequences."⁹ Hendricks' study gives a clear idea of where anger originates in the body.

Tristan Loo, an expert in conflict resolution, has studied the causes of anger. He narrows the causes to four internal causes.¹⁰ The four internal causes are: 1). Emotional reasoning – people who interpret events and things emotionally misinterpret the event/thing as being a threat to their well-being and then become irritated; 2). Low frustration tolerance – whenever people

⁷ Tavis, *Anger*, 86-87.

⁸ LaVelle Hendricks, Sam Bore, Dean Aslinia, and Guy Morriss, "The Effects of Anger on the Brain and Body," *National Forum Journal of Counseling and Addiction* vol. 2, num.1 (2013): 5.

⁹ Hendricks, "The Effects of Anger on the Brain and Body," 6.

¹⁰ Tristan Loo, *What Causes Anger?* August 9, 2005, para. 4.

are stressed out, they do not tolerate frustrations as easily and interpret things as a threat; 3). Unreasonable expectations – when people expect others to act a certain way, and that does not happen, they tend to have a lower frustration tolerance as well; 4). People-rating – people apply some sort of derogatory term on others.

No matter what causes it, anger psychologically changes people. It causes a chain reaction in one's body and can rapidly take a hold of the central nervous system. Depending on the strength of the hormone levels, anger could grow in strength until it floods the whole body and leaves the person without any control. These psychological changes, then, begin to influence the person's actions.

How do these psychological changes affect us and our actions?

When people experience anger, what has happened that they feel that emotion? Andrew D. Lester says anger arises when some outside force poses a threat to us, thereby sparking anxiety and raising an internal alarm that we need to respond.¹¹ He describes three forms the threat could take. It could be a physical threat, such as illness, natural disaster, war, or anything that would harm our physical well-being. It could be a threat to our social self. God has created us with a need for love and to show love. Thus, the body interprets anything that disrupts that need for love as a threat. Finally, it could be a threat to our self-esteem. Lester splits this into two sub-threats: conscience and ideal self. The threat from conscience comes when we did or did not do something according to our values, which leaves us feeling guilty. The threat from ideal self comes when we are not living as we think we should be living.

Once the threat has been internally determined, our bodies then produce a response to meet the threat. Lester describes the response as being three part in nature. There is a bodily

¹¹ Andrew D. Lester, "Toward a New Understanding of Anger in Christian experience," *Review & Expositor* 78, no. 4 (Fall 1981): 568-571.

response (increased blood pressure, adrenaline rush, etc.), a cognitive response (calculating the nature of the threat and determining alternative action), and an emotional response—of which anger is usually the second emotion people feel.¹² This last part might be surprising to people. When they later recall the event, the emotion they might remember more is their anger. The anger had been so strong in the moment that, even though the event had been long over, people still recalled how strong their anger was.

But is anger the first emotion people feel in such a case, or is it something else? Timothy Smith believes anger is not the primary emotion. As he puts it, “Anger is a secondary emotion...Our anger is triggered when a primary emotion is not completely and properly resolved.”¹³ Anger, then, is the “response” emotion, one that flows out of another emotion that has not been settled. What, then, would be those emotions that trigger anger? Lester names fear as an initial emotion. Smith says fear is just one of three possible emotions people feel in such a circumstance. The other two are anxiety and emotional hurt/rejection. With all three emotions, it is necessary to “identify the experience,” as Smith calls it. This means determining which emotion (fear, hurt, or anxiety) one is feeling and then confronting it appropriately. If this is not done, then anger will emerge and take over the body.¹⁴

If anger does emerge, then, what advice do people typically receive concerning how to deal with that anger? “Just let it out” or “Do not let it show—keep it in” might be the two usual pieces of advice given. People, then, will either express their anger in an outward way or keep it to themselves. But is either way the better way, or are neither good at all?

¹² Lester, “Toward a New Understanding of Anger,” 563-565.

¹³ Timothy J. Smith, *Anger: Be Angry, Sin Not—A book in the Pearls of Life Series* (Pearl of Life.net, 2018), 19.

¹⁴ Smith, *Anger: Be Angry, Sin Not*, 18-19.

Dr. Gary Chapman believes both ways of dealing with anger are not good at all.

Concerning outward anger, which he calls *explosive* anger, he says,

Explosive, angry behavior is never constructive. It not only hurts the person at whom it is directed, it destroys the self-esteem of the person who is out of control. No one can feel good about themselves when they think about what they have done. In the heat of such angry explosions, people say and do things they later regret. Undisciplined anger that expresses itself in verbal and physical explosions will ultimately destroy relationships.¹⁵

Outward expression of anger can be extremely harmful. “Letting it out” has the potential to wreck even the best of dear, close relationships with others. If someone vents their anger out loud, they could possibly attack even their friends and family. This, then, creates a domino effect. When someone becomes angry, they could take it out on loved ones. After this, the loved ones could feel unsafe. Knowing their loved one has the ability to really lash out at them, it could become difficult for people to continue to trust them. If left unchecked, that explosive anger could dissolve the offender’s relationship with those they care about.

Dr. Tavis also believes letting anger out—what she calls *expressed anger*—can negatively affect those who are prone to anger. She identifies three myths about expressive anger which had long been believed in the psychological field. The first myth is *aggression is the instinctive catharsis for anger*.¹⁶ For years, it was believed that aggression naturally flows out when someone becomes angry. This was believed to be especially true about men, while women were considered to use friendliness for their catharsis. But Tavis studied this myth and discovered aggression is not an instinctive response to anger. Some people, based on personality and personal experience, do not find using aggression cathartic. These people tend to feel guilty

¹⁵ Gary Chapman, *Anger: Taming A Powerful Emotion* (Chicago: Moody Publisher, 1999), 85.

¹⁶ Tavis, *Anger*, 123.

after using aggression, so telling them to “let it go” may only increase or intensify their guilt afterward.¹⁷

The second myth Tavis debunks is *talking out anger gets rid of it—or at least makes you feel less angry*.¹⁸ This myth conforms to the thinking that communicating with each other clearly and honestly will help settle issues and problems. Talking out how someone was feeling seemed to give that person a chance to identify which precise emotion they were feeling. But Tavis points out, “You seldom find ‘pure’ emotions. Most are combinations that reflect the complexity of the problem and our lives.”¹⁹ Rather than feeling one particular emotion in one particular moment, people tend to feel several different emotions in that same moment. Also, talking out anger can increase that anger or restart it. Tavis offers the solution that one must strike a balance between saying too much and saying too little in talking out anger. Finding that balance could lead to discovering practical solutions for dealing with anger instead of inflaming it even more.²⁰

The last myth about expressed anger Tavis addresses is *tantrums and other childhood rages are healthy expressions of anger that forestall neurosis*.²¹ Researchers in the psychoanalytic world thought that children’s tantrums were indicative of a neurosis caused by repressed anger when the children were infants.²² Letting that anger out in the form of tantrums, they thought, could prevent that neurosis from developing. Tavis, however, says tantrums are not true expressions of anger; rather, they are used as a sort of bargaining chip, something children use to receive something from their parents. Sadly, this has led to an untold number of parents tolerating bad behavior from their children. Because the parents do not want to either

¹⁷ Tavis, *Anger*, 131.

¹⁸ Tavis, *Anger*, 131.

¹⁹ Tavis, *Anger*, 132.

²⁰ Tavis, *Anger*, 134-135.

²¹ Tavis, *Anger*, 135.

²² Tavis, *Anger*, 135.

spoil their children or cause a neurosis, they tend to accept whatever behavior comes from the children.²³

What about suppressing anger? What are the dangers associated with that? Chapman calls suppressing anger *implosive anger* because it causes people to deteriorate internally when held within. Chapman compares implosive anger to demolishing a building. Demolition workers place the explosives inside the building to contain the blast and debris within the building as it crumbles. In a similar way, implosive anger keeps the anger within a person and slowly destroys them on the inside.²⁴

Chapman says there are three key elements that characterize implosive anger, the first of which is denial. When someone suppresses their anger internally, they will usually deny that they are angry; instead, they may offer an excuse such as, “I am not angry, but I am frustrated.” But they are experiencing anger, and denying its existence does not dissolve it. Instead, anger will continue to grow until one cannot deny it.²⁵

The second characteristic of implosive anger is withdrawal. Chapman describes this as the “central strategy” of people with implosive anger:

While admitting anger to themselves and others, they withdraw from the person or situation that stirred up the anger. The idea is not denial—but distance. *If I can stay away from the person or least not talk to him when I am with him, perhaps my anger will diminish with time*, the angry individual reassures herself.²⁶

People believe distance can help them get over their anger toward an individual or a situation.

But this can only help to inflame the anger more, and then it can appear outwardly in one of two different ways.

²³ Tavis, *Anger*, 143.

²⁴ Chapman, *Anger: Taming*, 86.

²⁵ Chapman, *Anger: Taming*, 88.

²⁶ Chapman, *Anger: Taming*, 88.

The first way implosive anger can show itself is in *passive-aggressive behavior*. On the outside, the person might seem calm and settled, giving no indication that something is bothering them. But, internally, the anger eats away at them, leading them to not listen to others' requests. Chapman uses the example of Andy and Rachel for passive-aggressive behavior. Andy is frustrated that Rachel does not show interest in sexual intimacy. So, in retaliation, Andy does not help Rachel with giving their kids their bath or washing windows. But Rachel may be acting passive-aggressively by not being sexually intimate with Andy because he may not be spending as much time with her as she would like. Chapman says, in a case like this, the passive-aggressiveness will continue acting out until either Andy and Rachel break the cycle or their marriage falls apart.²⁷

The other way implosive anger acts out is when someone *redirects* their anger. Instead of letting their anger fly against the person or situation that inflamed them, the person chooses to react against someone or something that did not cause the hurt. Chapman gives the example of the man who is angry with his boss. But rather than letting his anger out against his boss and risk getting fired, the man takes it out on his family, thereby arousing anger among the family members.²⁸

These two ways—redirecting anger and passive-aggressive behavior—show how destructive suppressing anger can be on a person. They can also lead to some serious health issues, both physiological and psychological. For example, recent research suggests suppressed anger is a cause of migraine headaches, heart disease, and other health effects. The greater

²⁷ Chapman, *Anger: Taming*, 89.

²⁸ Chapman, *Anger: Taming*, 89-90.

impact, however, is with a person's psychological and mental health. Suppressed anger can eventually turn into resentment and bitterness.²⁹

The final characteristic of implosive anger is *brooding*. When someone is aroused to anger by another person or a certain situation, they allow the events of that experience to replay in their heads. As they recall the experience, their anger replays in their heads, too. But they do not share this anger, whether it would be with the person who offended them or a counselor or a loved one. Eventually, if left unprocessed, this anger will develop into bitterness and resentment. The resentment, in turn, could bring about the person's implosion, whether it be an emotional breakdown, development of depression, or, in some cases, the person commits suicide.³⁰ However, for a growing number of people, suppressing anger leads not to an implosion, but to an explosion. As the bitterness and resentment continue to reside, the anger finally forces the person to commit some sort of violence against the person who aroused their anger. Chapman says this is why numerous murders occur – because the murderer held in their anger and let it overtake them.³¹

Implosive anger is just as nasty and destructive as explosive anger. Both kinds of anger can negatively impact a person's overall health and stability, as well as affect their relationships with others. Thus, those two pieces of advice mentioned above—"let it out" and "do not let it show"—would be poor advice for someone trying to deal with anger. If they are pushed in either direction, the resulting consequences could become very brutal. As will be mentioned later, there are better ways of handling anger.

²⁹ Chapman, *Anger: Taming*, 90.

³⁰ Chapman, *Anger: Taming*, 90-91.

³¹ Chapman, *Anger: Taming*, 91.

Overall, anger produces a significant psychological effect on the human body and mind. No matter if there is a genetic factor or if is a learned behavior, anger can be an overpowering emotion. When someone perceives an outside force as a threat to their well-being, anger will eventually rise to the top and pit them into fight or flight mode. However, that anger can easily take over and control every action and thought of the person. Negative effects/results of anger will show themselves, regardless of whether the person expresses it or keeps it hidden within themselves. Ultimately, anger has the power to ruin someone's life.

A Scriptural View of Anger

“Many Christians have been taught that anger in any shape or form is sinful.”³² This quote by Andrew Lester highlights a truth that many Christians believe. Perhaps they know the physical/mental/psychological damage anger can do, and thus they strive to not let anger get the better of them. If they do become angry, later they may say, “I’m sorry—I know it’s wrong to be angry.” Is that correct? Is it wrong to be angry? Or does our God and his Word tell us something different about anger?

What the Inspired Writers Say about Anger

Before studying what the Scripture writers say about the emotion of anger, it is important to know in what this emotion is rooted. The prophet Moses writes in Genesis 1, “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness’...So God created mankind in his own image; in the image of God he created them” (Gen. 1:26-27). Anger, as well as everything else that is part of the physical/mental makeup of humans, finds its root in the image of God.

To be created in the image of God means to be completely holy, just as God himself is completely holy. The image of God, however, is not to be found in the physical human body. God does not have a physical body, which means he imprinted his image on the human soul. Psychologists like to separate the soul into three parts: intellect, will, and emotions. Although this division runs the risk of obscuring the unity of the soul, it does aid Christians, with their finite, limited knowledge, to understand the details of the image of God.³³

When God created man, he created a perfect harmony between man’s intellect, will, and emotions and his own. This means man could think, act, and experience emotion the same way

³² Andrew D. Lester, *Coping with Your Anger: A Christian Guide* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 15.

³³ John P. Meyer, “The Image of God, Genesis 1,” in *Our Great Heritage, vol. II*, ed. Lyle Lange (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991), 180-81.

God experiences them. This harmony enabled man to carry out his God-given rule over the earth. Concerning emotions particularly, Prof. John P. Meyer believes harmony between man's emotions and God's emotions is necessary. Without it, he says, "The dominion would have had to become an unbearable torture for man. As long as he bore the image of God, he could not enjoy things and actions abhorrent to God."³⁴

When Meyer discusses the emotions, he does not make a listing of those emotions that are good and those that are bad. Instead, he states man's emotions are in harmony with God's image. This can only mean that even the emotion of anger comes from God himself. Timothy Smith sums it well:

God is Creator and scripture states that all we are comes from God. If all that we are and all that we have are ultimately given to us by God, what does this say about anger? God created man and everything that makes us a person. When God was finished with His creation of man, He said, "It is good." This means that anger is good. ANGER is good! Let that sink in for a minute...Anger IS good! Wait for it...Anger is GOOD!³⁵

Those familiar words from Genesis 1, "And God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:10), demonstrate that God was pleased with every part of his creation, including man and his emotions. Thus, it would be correct to view anger as a good gift from God. As Dr. Chapman states, "Human anger is designed by God to motivate us to take constructive action in the face of wrongdoing or when facing injustice."³⁶

In fact, the Scriptures do not say that anger is bad, and that someone should never become angry. What they do say about anger is how to properly handle and manage it. The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, long called the Wisdom Books (due to the spiritual counsel they offer), address the topic of anger. Nowhere in either of those books does one find the

³⁴ Meyer, "The Image of God," *Our Great Heritage*, 181-82.

³⁵ Smith, *Be Angry: Sin Not*, 50.

³⁶ Chapman, *Anger: Taming*, 25.

prohibition, “A wise person will never become angry.”³⁷ The inspired writers recognized that people do experience anger. As Smith describes it, “Being angry is not the problem...The behavior or actions we respond with as a result of our anger is what leads us to trouble.”³⁸

Thus, whenever someone reading Proverbs or Ecclesiastes comes across a passage or group of passages that discusses anger, they will see those passages do not prohibit anger. Rather, they will see counsel on how to handle and manage anger. One example of such counsel is Proverbs 14:29: “Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.” The counsel given in this passage is not, “Never become angry.” What it says is, “Never become quick to act on your anger” (which is what quick-tempered refers to). Another example of handling anger is Ecclesiastes 7:9: “Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.” In this passage, King Solomon is not saying we should never become angry, but that it would be foolish to be quick to act on our anger.

Scripture does also include cautions on the danger anger poses. This is best highlighted by the first wicked use of anger in the account of Cain and Abel from Genesis 4. When Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord, the Lord accepted Abel’s offering but not Cain’s. How did Cain respond to this? He is described as being very angry and downcast. Genesis continues:

Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it” (Gen. 4:6-7).

Once again, the Lord does not tell Cain to not be angry. What he tells him is to not let his anger control him. When someone is angry, they are more exposed to temptation.³⁹ The Lord is thus

³⁷ Lester, *Coping with Your Anger*, 39.

³⁸ Smith, *Be Angry: Sin Not*, 13.

³⁹ Lester, *Coping with Your Anger*, 39.

warning Cain, “Your anger is leaving you vulnerable to temptation. Do not act on those temptations—think about what you are going to do next.”

These counsels and prohibitions from Scripture concerning the use of anger demonstrate that anger is not a foreign emotion to humans, but that it is part of the makeup and design of humans as God created them. There is no attempt by Scripture to prohibit and condemn anger at all. Instead, as Lester puts it, Scripture “challenges God’s people to take ethical responsibility for evaluating *what* to get angry at and *how* to express the anger they *do* experience”⁴⁰ (*Lester’s emphasis, not this author’s*). To sum up what Scripture teaches about anger: anger is a good gift of God, but how we handle and manage it can be sinful.

How God Views and Uses Anger

Why is it possible to consider anger to be a good gift of God? Not only because does anger find its origin in the image of God, but also because God experiences anger himself. God did not create, and he does not rule, the entire universe as some emotionless deity. Scripture clearly demonstrates that God experiences emotions—with anger being perhaps the best example. Some, then, may ask, “Why does God become angry?” Gary Chapman believes God becomes angry because of two key aspects of his divine nature: his holiness and his love.⁴¹

Throughout Scripture, all the inspired writers clearly and precisely note that God is holy; there is absolutely no evil or wrong within him. God expressly told the Israelites in their journey from Egypt to Canaan:

I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves along the ground. I am the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy (Lev. 11:44-45).

⁴⁰ Lester, *Coping with Your Anger*, 40.

⁴¹ Chapman, *Anger: Taming*, 20.

God commanded the Israelites to be holy, which, in this context, means they were to behave as God's chosen people. They were not to worship false gods, murder one another, etc., because they were the people of God's promise of the Savior. They were the people who bore God's own name before the other nations. To live wickedly would mean tarnishing the name of God, something he despises. Thus, he wanted them to live in a way that would protect his holiness.

Another key characteristic of God is his grace—his unconditional love for sinners. This characteristic is displayed on every single page of Scripture. God constantly displays his love for unworthy sinners time and again throughout Biblical and secular history. Even when Israel went astray and followed false gods, God still showed his love to them, even when it seems he had lost all sense of compassion and mercy for them.

What do these characteristics of holiness and love have to do with God's anger? Simply put, God becomes angry in order to protect his holiness and his love. God's holiness is what sets him apart from all creation—he has no sin or evil within him, while everything in creation has been stained by sin and its damaging effects. God also loves his creation, specifically humans (the crown of his creation), and wants only what is best for them.

When either God's holiness or his love is threatened by sin and evil, God becomes angry. Interestingly, the Old Testament has 455 places where anger is listed; of that total, 375 specifically refers to God experiencing anger.⁴² All these occurrences of anger were God's responses to threats to his holiness and love. But since God is a holy and righteous God, his anger is never sinful, but is a righteous anger.

Chapman describes why God becomes angry this way:

Because God is holy and *because* God is love, God necessarily experiences anger. His love only seeks the good of His creatures. His holiness stands forever against sin. All of God's moral laws are based upon His holiness and His love; that is, they are always

⁴² Chapman, *Anger: Taming*, 20.

aligned with what is right, and they are always for the good of His creatures⁴³
(Chapman's emphases, not this author's).

God's use of anger is never sinful, for he is absolutely without sin. His use of anger always has a good purpose to it: to protect his holiness and the good of those he loves.

Perhaps this now begs the question: How can God use anger out of love for sinners? God uses his anger out of love when he announces wrath on the evildoer. All the various times God sent a prophet to Israel or to another nation, he sent that prophet with the intention of leading people to repentance. Maybe the best example of this is the prophet Jonah declaring God's wrath on Nineveh. Through Jonah, God announced that he would destroy Nineveh in judgment for their wickedness. This message disturbed everyone in Nineveh, including the king. But then all of them repented of their sins (which they showed by wearing sackcloth). How did God react to Nineveh's repentance? "He relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened" (Jonah 3:10). In this instance, God used anger in a positive way. While he is still a just God who punishes sin, when sinners repent, his anger dies down and he forgives them. Thus, it can be said God uses anger out of love for sinners.

On this basis, a working definition of *righteous anger* can be established. Understanding that God becomes angry to protect his holiness and his love, righteous anger, then, is *anger expressed toward a clear violation of God's holy will and love*. Righteous anger can be utilized to gain positive results. God used it when confronting Nineveh with their sin—an action which resulted in their repentance. Anytime someone sees another openly disobeying and violating God's will, they would be justified in becoming angry. Righteous anger is never meant to be harmful to others, but always meant for their good.

Psalm 4 – An Exegetical Study

⁴³ Chapman, *Anger: Taming*, 21.

Since a definition of righteous anger has been established, the next question is: does this definition fit the context of the base passages of this paper? Psalm 4:4 and Ephesians 4:26 were previously mentioned as the two passages on which this paper finds its basis. It would be appropriate to consider whether these passages do, indeed, advocate for a righteous anger for Christians, starting with Psalm 4.

Psalm 4 was written by David, perhaps around the time his son Absalom rebelled against him.⁴⁴ It is one of many prayers David composes in Psalm asking for deliverance from his enemies. After asking the Lord for deliverance in verse 1, David admonishes his enemies against their foolish pursuit of false gods.

Then comes verse 4 (verse 5 in the Hebrew text): רַגְזוּ וְאַל־תִּחַטְּאוּ, which translates to “Tremble and do not sin.” רַגְזוּ is the Qal 2nd person masculine plural imperative of the verb רָגַז, which means “to quake or shake.” This definition suggests the idea that people shake from some emotion like fear or anger.⁴⁵

What could David possibly mean when he tells his enemies to tremble and not sin? Commentators are divided on what David is saying. H.C. Leupold believes David is telling his enemies to stand in awe of God, for doing so would naturally lead them to abandon their wicked ways.⁴⁶ This interpretation would credibly fit the context, for David had just told his enemies how their pursuit of false gods is pointless, and that God opposes their every move against him.

Leupold also tackles a huge question: what to make of the popular translation, “In your anger do not sin.” He says this translation comes from the Septuagint translation of this verse. In place of רַגְזוּ, the Septuagint has ὀργιζεσθε, which translates to “be angry.” Leupold says Paul

⁴⁴ John Brug, *A Commentary on Psalms 1-72* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2004), 134.

⁴⁵ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce Waltke, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 830.

⁴⁶ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959), 68-69.

probably used the Septuagint when he referred to Psalm 4:4 in Ephesians 4:26. But Leupold also does not see how Paul could be admonishing evildoers to show righteous indignation.⁴⁷ For Leupold, “be angry” does not make as much sense in the context of Psalm 4 as “tremble” – shaking from awe of the Lord – seems to do.

Franz Delitzsch, like Leupold, sees verse 4 as being addressed to David’s enemies.⁴⁸ But he firmly sides with the Septuagint translation: “Be angry, but do not sin.” Delitzsch interprets this verse as such because he believes David asserts in verses 2-3 that Absalom’s men are coming after him to ruin his reputation and personal honor.⁴⁹ Thus, David would be telling his opponents to not let their personal feelings toward him get the better of them and they sin against God.

John Brug bridges a sort-of middle ground between Leupold and Delitzsch. Brug sees this verse as not being addressed to David’s enemies but his followers.⁵⁰ If, as has been thought, David wrote this psalm around the time his son Absalom rebelled against him, David’s followers may have been furious at Absalom – maybe even to the point where they may have been thinking of ways to get rid of Absalom. If this would be the case, then this verse, as Brug interprets it, would be David telling his friends to not let their anger lead them into sin.⁵¹ Brug, thus, sees אַרַך as “be angry,” but he sees it as an admonition against letting one’s anger control their actions.

Does Psalm 4 imply that Christians can have righteous anger? While theologians differ over what David means with אַרַך, anger definitely has a connection (even if “tremble” is the

⁴⁷ Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 69.

⁴⁸ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 1, translated by Rev. Francis Bolton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1884), 113.

⁴⁹ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 113-14.

⁵⁰ Brug, *A Commentary on Psalms 1-72*, 143.

⁵¹ Brug, *A Commentary on Psalms 1-72*, 143.

meaning). Those who say אַף does not mean, “be angry” do have some validity. However, I would side with Delitzsch and Brug. They understand David as saying (whether to friends or to enemies), “Do not let your anger get the best of you – do not let it push you into sin.” It would appear, then, they are leaving some room for a good kind of anger, one which does not lead a person into sin. This is the view I take on Psalm 4 – there can be a good, righteous anger that Christians can experience and not sin against God or others in that anger.

Ephesians 4 – An Exegetical Study

While there has been divided sentiment over whether David talks about righteous anger in Psalm 4, do those same sentiments carry over to Paul’s quotation of Psalm 4:4 in Ephesians 4:26? Or does Paul clearly talk about righteous anger in the context of the chapter?

Ephesians is one of Paul’s “prison epistles,” one of four letters he wrote while imprisoned in Rome ca.63 A.D. This letter discusses the gracious power of God as it works through the church. In chapter 4, Paul focuses on the Christian’s response to God’s grace and power in their life. After encouraging the Ephesians to “live a life worthy of the calling [they] had received” (Eph. 4:1) by turning from their pagan ways and practices, Paul says in 4:26: **ὀργίξεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε.**⁵² As mentioned above, Paul quotes directly from Psalm 4 in the Septuagint, which translates the verse as, “Be angry and do not sin.”

Does Paul advocate for righteous anger in this context? Thomas Winger does not think so. He notes how the Scriptures hardly ever show anger as being righteous.⁵³ As this is not the context in Psalm 4, Winger believes what Paul is really saying is, “When you are angry, do not

⁵² Aland, B., Aland, K., Karavidopoulos, J., Martini, C. M., & Metzger, B. M. (Eds.). (2014). *The Greek New Testament* (Fifth Revised Edition, Eph 4:26). Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

⁵³ Thomas M. Winger, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture—Ephesians* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 521-22.

allow it to lead you to sin” – an interpretation espoused by both Delitzsch and Brug above. Frank Thielman offers similar views when he says, “Paul expresses no interest in the philosophical debate in his time over whether all anger is harmful and should be eliminated or some anger is justified...Here he views anger simply as an emotion that can quickly become sinful.”⁵⁴

Thielman espouses a view that Paul is simply cautioning against acting out in one’s anger.

William Hendriksen agrees with that same line of thought when he says, “Anger, especially with reference to the neighbor, easily degenerates into hatred and resentment.”

However, he also argues that not all anger is wrong – in fact, it is good to be angry when someone clearly is sinning out in the open.⁵⁵ A. Skevington Wood concurs with Hendriksen, stating how righteous anger is ascribed to God and to Jesus in Scripture, which must mean it is a legitimate thing for Christians to have.⁵⁶

Do both Psalm 4 and Ephesians 4 teach about righteous anger? Based on the opinions of numerous exegetes and theologians, it appears to be a mixed record. Some caution against it, citing how Scripture does not portray anger in a good light. Others point out how anger can be good, but it is something that could quickly lead someone into sin. But these passages do, indeed, teach something about anger – how it can be good.

In Ephesians 4, after Paul admonishes to be angry and not sin, he says, “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold” (Eph 4:26b-27). Paul is not saying anger is bad. But he is saying it is wrong to let anger fester. If that anger lingers, then the devil may see an opportunity to push people into using their anger for some selfish

⁵⁴ Frank Thielman, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 314.

⁵⁵ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), 218.

⁵⁶ A. Skevington Wood, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 11 (Ephesians—Philemon)*, Frank Gaebelin, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 64.

purposes. Thus, Paul is encouraging to deal with anger quickly rather than letting it linger. Returning to the working definition listed above, if there is a sin happening clearly before people, it is right for Christians to become angry over that sin. The more pertinent question (which will be addressed in the second half of this paper) will be how to best control that anger.

A Theological View of Anger

The Scriptures make it clear that there is such a thing as righteous anger. Whenever God becomes angry, it is always righteous because God himself is righteous—he cannot commit evil in anger. But how does anger apply to human beings? Can they experience righteous anger, or do they only express sin-based anger whenever they become angry? A look at some theologians' view on anger would be most helpful in determining the answer to those questions.

How Lutherans View Anger

If one considers what Lutheran dogmaticians/theologians say about anger, there would be no better place for them to start than with Martin Luther. Luther addressed the topic of anger several times in his sermons and writings throughout his career. In one of his sermons on the Ten Commandments from 1516, Luther describes the story of a monk who left his monastery for a remote area. When the monk went to collect water, he allowed his jug to overflow, and smashed it in anger. But when the monk regained his control, he realized his anger had not been caused by those he had lived with, but by his own sinful heart and flesh.⁵⁷ Luther, thus, would disagree with Carol Tavris on the origin of anger: Tavris believed anger was a learned behavior from outside the body, while Luther believed anger arises from the sinful heart.

In a later sermon on Matthew 5:20-26, Luther explained how men try their best to rationalize anger:

This vice of anger uses the trick of making itself look good; for this is how we reason: That fellow has done this and that to me; I would be doing wrong if I did not look sour and be angry about it. I would be encouraging in wrongdoing. I must let the rascal be softened a bit; otherwise he will not do any good as long as he lives. If the heart is inclined to anger to begin with and, besides, now gets the notion that it is doing right and well by being angry, then the devil has won his game, the grudge grows greater from day to day, and the hearts become increasingly bitter toward one another.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, vol. I: Absolution—Giving (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House), 26.

⁵⁸ Plass, *What Luther Says*, 27.

To Luther, rationalizing anger was just as dangerous as anger itself. If people determine that expressing anger is the only right way to respond to a particular action (even though in that case the anger would be misplaced), then anger has won a lodging place in their hearts and continues to fester unheeded.

In that same Matthew 5 sermon, Luther discussed how, when someone offends another, the latter will often become angry with the former instead of correctly becoming angry with the sin that was done. Luther did state that anger is sometimes necessary, but, as he described it, “Be sure you use it correctly. You are commanded to get angry, not on your own behalf but on behalf of your office and of God.”⁵⁹ What Luther meant was people should become angry at the sin/wrong that was done, not at the person who wronged them. He illustrated that point with the example of a judge. Perhaps the judge does not personally wish the criminal harm, but in his office of enforcing the law, he hands down punishment because he is angry at the crime that had been committed.⁶⁰ For Luther, anger was justifiable for humans when such anger was directed toward sin, not fellow humans.

Francis Pieper concurred with Luther on the origin of anger. In his *Christian Dogmatics*, Pieper quoted Luther concerning sanctification and the Christian’s struggle with the sinful nature:

The real sword is this, that you are strong and firm in the faith. If with your heart you take hold of the Word of God and cling to it in faith, the devil cannot win, but must flee. If you can say: “This my God hath said; on this I take my stand,” you will see that he slinks away, and with him will depart the sluggishness, the evil desires, *anger*, miserliness, melancholy, and doubt.⁶¹ (*emphasis added by this author*)

⁵⁹ Plass, *What Luther Says*, 28.

⁶⁰ Plass, *What Luther Says*, 28.

⁶¹ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. III (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 17.

With this Luther quote, Pieper endorsed the idea that anger originates in the sinful heart.

Although he did not directly state it, he appeared to give tacit approval to the belief that human anger is sinful. Pieper would not be completely wrong in thinking this way. He would have countless biblical examples where people used their anger for selfish purposes as support for this.

Pieper did make one critical note about describing God's anger. In discussing the vicarious atonement of Christ, he noted how some people "object that it is a disparagement of the Divine Being to predicate of Him anger, wrath, enmity, as if nothing less of Christ's substitutional suffering and death could reconcile Him to man."⁶² For some people, the idea of God becoming angry in the vicarious atonement did not seem right. They desired to show Christ's atonement was enough to pay for sin.

Pieper would not deny that Christ's atonement was sufficient, but he stated, "Only Scripture can tell us what conceptions of God are worthy and unworthy of Him, and Scripture tells us that according to His righteousness God is angry with sinful men."⁶³ Pieper would agree with Chapman's assessment that God becomes angry to protect his holiness and love. God opposes all that is evil and wicked, and thus becomes angry when sin occurs. But Pieper mentioned how Christ absorbed God's wrath in the sinners' place, and thus God's anger toward sinners has been replaced with grace.⁶⁴

Both Luther and Pieper recognized that anger in people arises from the sinful heart. When anger is given a place in the heart, it has the chance to overtake and influence people into committing great and shameful sins. But they also realized there is justification for anger over

⁶² Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics, vol. II* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 352.

⁶³ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics, vol. II*, 352.

⁶⁴ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics, vol. II*, 352.

sin. God himself becomes angry over sin and punishes sin, though he has mercy on the sinner. Likewise, Luther and Pieper believed people could have that kind of anger as well. In their minds, it is right to become angry at sin and its effects, but it is better to display mercy instead of anger to the sinner.

How the Catholic Church Views Anger

The Catholic Church teaches human anger in a negative sense. They consider anger to be something sinful. In their Catechism, they list anger (which they also identify as wrath) among the so-called Seven Deadly Sins because it can quickly grow and lead people into other sins.⁶⁵ Later, in the section on the Fifth Commandment, they write, “In the account of Abel’s murder by his brother Cain, Scripture reveals the presence of anger and envy in man, consequences of original sin, from the beginning of human history.”⁶⁶ They further add a few paragraphs later that Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, adds the proscription of anger, hatred, and vengeance in his teaching on the Fifth Commandment.⁶⁷ Finally, under the section “Safeguarding Peace,” they directly state that anger is a desire for revenge, and if that anger leads someone to kill another, then it is a mortal sin, worthy of damnation.⁶⁸

Thus, the Catholic Church teaches anger in humans is always sinful. When anger arises, it drags the person along and leads them to commit shameful, mortal sins. There certainly is nothing wrong with viewing anger this way. After all, the sinful nature exists within every human heart and always looks for ways to push people into greater sins. However, what the Catholic Church is missing is the view Luther and Pieper take on anger: when anger is directed

⁶⁵ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, ed., *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1994), 457 paragraph 1866.

⁶⁶ Ratzinger, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 544 paragraph 2259.

⁶⁷ Ratzinger, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 545 paragraph 2262.

⁶⁸ Ratzinger, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 554 paragraph 2302.

against sin, then it can serve a good purpose. Of course, this may be something easier said than done, but the Word does teach about how to control anger and to use it wisely. To forget these passages could lead to forgetting how anger, in and of itself, is not wrong—it is how one thinks and acts when angry that makes anger so troublesome.

A Few Other Christian Views on Anger

Liberal Christian theologian Millard Erickson devotes only a few short pages in his *Christian Theology* to explain anger, mainly, the anger of God against sin. He discusses various terms Scripture uses to picture God's anger, such as אַרְיָה in Hebrew (picturing God's anger as a blazing heat) and θυμός in Greek (signifying wrath that will result in divine action).⁶⁹ But he also offers two insightful comments concerning God's anger:

The first is that anger is not something that God chooses to feel. His disapproval of sin is not an arbitrary matter, for his very nature is one of holiness; it automatically rejects sin... The second comment is that we must avoid thinking of God's anger as being excessively emotional. It is not as if he is seething with anger, his temper virtually surging out of control. He is capable of exercising patience and long-suffering, and does so.⁷⁰

Erickson recognizes God's holiness is naturally opposed to every evil thing. Thus, God also naturally rejects sin. And God does exercise patience and control over his anger, allowing sinners time to repent. Curiously, Erickson does not address anger any further in his book, leaving out how anger affects humans and their subsequent actions.

One interesting view on anger comes from Ruth E. Krall, a professor of religion at Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana.⁷¹ Krall, who grew up in the Anabaptist denomination, had grown up being taught that anger was wrong, for it led to hatred and violence. But then she felt

⁶⁹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology, 2nd Ed.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 622.

⁷⁰ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 623.

⁷¹ Ruth E. Krall, "Anger and an Anabaptist Feminist Hermeneutic," *The Conrad Grebel Review*, 14 no.2 (Spr. 1996), 145nn.

her fellow Anabaptists were not living that way, as she knew many in her Mennonite community who did express anger.⁷² She performed a study of understanding anger, but she applied her own hermeneutical principles to this study, as Anabaptists do not have any up-to-date hermeneutics other than Scripture and their own traditions.⁷³

When Krall carried out her study, she wanted to see if anger could have some positive impact on society, specifically, changes in society. What she discovers is some rather practical advice concerning anger. First, she does not see anger as being able to make permanent social change. As she states, “I may use the experience of having received the communication of anger to change, but it is not an easy change to bring about. It is never a change devoid of lingering resentment.”⁷⁴ In her mind, anger cannot be used positively in the sense of forcing others to change their thinking—such a force sets off sparks and could begin a deep disagreement.

But she makes one intriguing comment about managing anger:

By my learning how to manage it, anger can serve me as a teacher, as an early warning system that something is amiss. By learning how to manage it, I do not need to retreat into conflict-avoidance, silence, passivity, or adult innocence. My anger can guide me on important trails to understanding that I have missed before.⁷⁵

To put Krall’s comment into a Christian perspective, anger could be God’s way of alerting Christians when someone is defying his holiness, or that a Christian may be headed down a destructive path if sin has mastery over them. This concept of managing anger will be explored again below.

⁷² Krall, “Anger and an Anabaptist Feminist Hermeneutic,” 145.

⁷³ Krall, “Anger and an Anabaptist Feminist Hermeneutic,” 148.

⁷⁴ Krall, “Anger and an Anabaptist Feminist Hermeneutic,” 160.

⁷⁵ Krall, “Anger and an Anabaptist Feminist Hermeneutic,” 162.

Can Christians Have Righteous Anger?

If someone walked up to people on the street and asked them that question, it is possible there would be mixed answers. Some would probably say, “Yes, righteous anger does exist.” Their proof would be whenever they hear about the latest crime spree going on in their neighborhood, and they experience the rush of frustration at the injustice that occurs. But maybe some would say, “No, it does not exist.” Perhaps they reason anger is only bad—that is why so much crime occurs in the communities and in society today.

How would Scripture answer that question? Observing the study on Scripture above, one could easily surmise that Scripture does say righteous anger exists. This is true especially when it concerns the anger God experiences. God’s anger is always righteous because of who he is—the holy, perfect, and righteous God and Creator of the universe. As stated above, God is completely holy—there is no evil within him. Naturally, God is opposed to everything evil and wicked, though he also delights in showing grace and mercy to sinners. When he sees his holiness being besmirched, or his grace being abused, then he becomes angry. Such anger is righteous as God is seeking to protect his holiness and love.

But what about Christians? Is it possible for them to have righteous anger? This is where things can become a little tricky. Christians do experience anger, but, for the most part, they use their anger as a means of satisfying their own purposes and desires (especially when those purposes and desires are sin-filled).

Jesus reveals just how poisonous anger can be when he says:

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, “You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.” But I tell you *that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment*. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, “Raca,” is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, “You fool!” will be danger of the fire of hell. (Mt. 5:21-22) (*emphasis added by this author*)

Anger has the power to overtake and control a person's actions. And Jesus says anything done in anger will bring a person into judgment. As Jeffrey Gibbs puts it, "Bitter insults partake of the same poisonous root as murder...murder, anger, and bitter insults all can lead down the road to eternal damnation."⁷⁶ This applies to Christians, who constantly wrestle with the sinful nature living inside them every day. The sinful nature is always ready to push Christians into emotional overdrive, especially with anger. Thus, there must be a fine line determining whether a Christian is acting out in righteous anger or not.

But there are times when Christians can experience righteous anger. When they see someone committing an act that clearly defies God's holiness and love, then they can experience anger. A modern example of this would be the battle over abortion. Numerous people in the country believe a woman has the right to terminate an unwanted pregnancy by aborting the baby. Such people see absolutely nothing wrong in the woman undergoing an abortion. But for Christians, this act is a violation of God's holy will. They know God says in his Word that life is a wonderful gift from him, and that he alone has the right to decide when that life shall end. Aborting a baby because the mother does not want it would be a gross violation of God's command. Thus, Christians would have the right to feel frustration at those who promote abortion, because they (the Christians) know what God says about such an act.

Can Christians have righteous anger? The answer is: Yes, they can have righteous anger. But it is not always easy to distinguish between righteous anger and sinful anger, since the sinful nature could convince someone their anger is righteous when it is clearly sinful anger. But when Christians witness a violation of God's holiness, will, and love happening, they would be

⁷⁶ Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture – Matthew 1:1-11:1* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 283.

justified in becoming angry. Their hope, then, is their anger could be used for good—to drive them to take positive action.

PART II: ANGER—PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Anger Applied, Part I: Biblical Case Studies

If righteous anger is, indeed, a thing Christians can have, what does that look like? How different is righteous anger from sinful anger? What reasons for being angry are justifiable? Fortunately, there are several biblical figures who provide real-life examples and answers for these questions. The following case studies will indicate whether someone from biblical history demonstrates righteous anger or not.

Moses: A Mixed Bag of Emotion

Moses is one of the greatest prophets of God who ever lived. His leadership and faithful service to God and to the Israelites serve as shining examples and testaments to the work of God's gospel ministers. But even with his faithful service, Moses, like everyone else, was a sinful human being. He, too, experienced the same anger and other emotions people experience daily. His actions in response to his anger varied, from misguided intentions to righteous indignation to sinful frustration.

Exodus 2 records that, when Moses was around 40, he went out and observed his people, the Israelites, who years before became slaves to the Egyptians. On this particular occasion, Moses saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite slave. Feeling outraged by this treatment, Moses killed the Egyptian and hid the body (Ex. 2:11-12).

Moses may have had good intentions, but his anger led him to act in a wrong manner. Moses' intention was to help and protect his fellow Israelite. He seems to have learned of his Israelite heritage and proudly embraced it. The writer to the Hebrews commends Moses in his Hall of Faith chapter (chapter 11):

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the

fleeting pressures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward (Heb. 11:24-26).

Siding with his people was a great act of faith for Moses. He recognized how Israel was not meant to be slaves to another nation, but it was meant to be the shining jeweled nation of God Almighty. In a sense, then, Moses had a sort of righteous zeal, because he noticed how mistreating fellow humans was wrong in God's eyes.

Unfortunately, while Moses may have had good intentions, his anger got the better of him. Instead of simply stopping the Egyptian from further harming the Israelite, Moses outright killed the Egyptian. Before he carried out this act, he looked "this way and that," making sure no one saw him; afterwards, he "hid him in the sand" (Ex.2:12). These actions, as Ernst Wendland says, "show that Moses himself knew that what he did was a crime."⁷⁷ Moses knew he was sinning by killing the Egyptian, but he might have thought it was for a good cause, namely, protecting his fellow Israelites. Even if that was his intent, Moses still demonstrates a misguided action in support of his intent. Thus, this instance is one where Moses' frustration cannot be condoned as righteous anger.

Years later, after Moses fled, returned to Egypt, and led Israel out of slavery, they came to Mt. Sinai. Here, God communicated with Moses and gave him his holy law, which the people were to follow. Exodus 32 tells what Moses did when he came down the mountain: "When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain" (Ex. 32:19).

Does Moses demonstrate righteous anger with his actions? This is a potential spot for people to debate. Some people might interpret Moses as being justified in his anger. After all, he had just seen his own people dancing around and worshiping a golden calf as their god, which is

⁷⁷ Ernst H. Wendland, *People's Bible Commentary: Exodus* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 16.

outright idolatry. However, they might think Moses went a step too far when he broke the tablets. They might reason an angry word from Moses could have stopped the people, but the breaking of the tablets was a little too much. They might use the account of Exodus 34 as proof Moses went too far, because in Exodus 34 Moses had to chisel out the new set of tablets himself. Perhaps this was God’s way of disciplining Moses for breaking the first set. This argument would be plausible and have some good merit.

However, I believe Moses does show righteous anger both in emotion and in action. Moses was justified in his anger over the calf. He had just been up on Mt. Sinai receiving God’s law—his holy Word—for the people to study and to follow faithfully. But when Moses comes down and sees the calf, he is witnessing pure idolatry. Thus, he is justified in becoming angry. He is also justified in breaking the tablets of stone. As Stephen Barton states it, “The violent breaking of the tablets...symbolizes the breaking of the covenant.”⁷⁸ Moses breaks the tablets to show the Israelites they had just violated God’s law, a violation which (like all sin) is worthy of judgment and death. Without that visual aid, the Israelites would not have as a clear a picture of what they had done if Moses had not done that. For these reasons, I believe Moses does express righteous anger with the breaking of the tablets.

There is one final noteworthy time where Moses experienced anger—a moment that had consequences for him. As the Israelites were wandering in the desert, they arrived at the Desert of Zin. Here, they complained against God and Moses when they could not find any water. God then tells Moses to speak to a nearby rock, and he would make water gush out from it (Num. 20:1-8). But Moses’ anger gets the better of him. Numbers 20 says:

He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, “Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?” Then Moses raised

⁷⁸ Stephen C. Barton, “‘Be Angry But Do Not Sin’ (Ephesians 4:26a): Sin and the Emotions in the New Testament with Special Reference to Anger,” *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 28 no. 1 (Feb. 2015), 26.

his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank (Num. 20:10-11).

In this instance, Moses does not show righteous anger. No one would blame him if he felt frustrated at times with being the leader of Israel—their constant complaining must have weighed heavily on him. But, in his anger and frustration, he disobeys God’s command to speak to the rock. Instead, he hits the rock twice with his staff. In addition, he said “must we,” almost suggesting he and Aaron, not God, are the ones bringing the water from the rock. As Paul Kuske describes it, “In effect they had sinned against the First Commandment, and therefore God chose to chastise them by withdrawing the blessing of entering the Promised Land.”⁷⁹ Because Moses sinned in his anger, God barred him from entering Canaan as discipline for his actions.

Overall, Moses is truly a mixed bag when it comes to experiencing anger. He had good intentions in the incident with the Egyptian, but he went about stopping that in the wrong way. His anger at Mt. Sinai was justifiable because he was witnessing Israel committing open idolatry. Finally, his anger in the Desert of Zin was completely sinful, as he deprived God of his glory when he brought the water from the rock. Moses, then, provides good examples of what righteous anger does and does not look like.

Samson: Righteous Anger or Irked Pride?

Samson is one of the more unique leaders during the time of the judges. He is known for his extremely sinful decision-making, such as his relationship with Delilah (who he was probably not married to). He did not seem to care whether his actions were disobedient in the eyes of the Lord. Despite Samson’s sinful lifestyle, God still used him to free the Israelites from the clutches of the Philistines. Among Samson’s actions, there is one long, notable instance of anger.

⁷⁹ Paul W. Kuske, *People’s Bible Commentary: Numbers* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 160-61.

Samson had gone down to Timnah, where he met and married a Philistine woman. At his wedding feast, Samson tells his groomsmen a riddle, which they could not answer. They eventually pressure his wife to get the answer from Samson, who does give it to her. She tells them the answer, and they respond with their own riddle to Samson. He then kills thirty men and gives their clothes to the groomsmen, and he leaves his bride behind (Judges 14:12-20).

Later, Samson decides he wants his wife back. But when he goes back to his father-in-law's house, he is informed his wife is married now to his best man. He then vows to harm the Philistines. Judges 15 describes what he does:

He went out and caught three hundred foxes and tied them tail to tail in pairs. He then fastened a torch to every pair of tails, lit the torches and let the foxes loose in the standing grain of the Philistines. He burned up the shocks and standing grain, together with the vineyards and olive groves (Judges 15:4-5).

After this incident, the Philistines burn Samson's wife and her family to death. Samson burns with anger and attacks and slaughters many Philistines in vengeance (Judges 15:7-8).

Was Samson justified in becoming angry and burning the Philistines' crops? Was he also justified in killing many Philistines after they killed his wife? Some might say he was justified especially with the latter action because he only wanted revenge, which is something completely natural for humans. However, I believe that, while God did use Samson's sinful actions to break the Philistine hold on Israel, Samson is not acting out of righteous anger, but more out of an irked pride. He is denied reuniting with his wife—in fact, she is now married to his former best man. He then seeks vengeance after the Philistines kill his wife. While I am not against justice being done, Samson disregards God's message from Deuteronomy 32, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay" (Deut 32:35). God would have given justice some other way. Even though Samson did start to break the Philistines' grip, he clearly was fueled by revenge in his heart, meaning he acted more out of hurt pride than righteous anger.

Saul: Offended by God's Enemies

King Saul is primarily in Scripture to serve as a warning for believers. Saul's life warns against rejecting the Lord in disobedience and unbelief. Those who follow down that road could meet a similar end as Saul. But, at the beginning of his reign as the first king of Israel, Saul was a follower of the Lord. There is also an event from his life where he demonstrates a godly, righteous anger.

Shortly after the prophet Samuel publicly declared Saul as the king of Israel, the Ammonites (long-time foes of the Israelites) attacked and besieged the city of Jabesh Gilead, which was east of the Jordan River. The Ammonites permitted the people of Jabesh to send for help throughout Israel before they would be forced to surrender. When the news reached Gibeah, Saul's hometown, the people mourned and wailed over the fate of Jabesh.

Saul was just returning from working in the fields and asked about the commotion. The people then told him the sad news. 1 Samuel 11 then says:

When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he burned with anger. He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, "This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel." Then the terror of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out together as one (1 Sam. 11:6-7).

After the Israelites assembled, Saul led them down to Jabesh, where God gave them a resounding victory over the Ammonites and freed Jabesh from their control.

This is easily a case where righteous anger is experienced. 1 Samuel 11 says the Holy Spirit came powerfully on Saul, meaning the Spirit placed in Saul's heart a holy disgust with the Ammonites threatening his fellow Israelites. Saul's cutting up his oxen was fueled by that Spirit-given anger. Anytime there is injustice happening, especially when such injustice is dealt to God's people, that is a setting where righteous anger can be experienced. When injustice is done

to God's people, it is also being done to God, thereby threatening his holiness. So, Saul does demonstrate a righteous anger here—he is offended by God's enemies mistreating God's people, and, moved by the Spirit, he is moved to correct the injustice.

David: Defending the Lord's Honor

Whereas King Saul is an example/warning to not reject the Lord, King David stands out as a shining model of living a life of faith. While David did have his moments of sinfulness (i.e., Bathsheba), he also demonstrates how the Word can convict and restore the wandering soul. In addition, he exemplifies how someone can express righteous anger when they think about God's holiness, honor, and love being threatened. The best proof of this comes from perhaps the most famous event of David's life.

The Philistines had been a constant nuisance to the Israelites since the time of Samson. One day, the two opponents gathered for battle at Sokoh in Judah. The Philistines sent out their champion, Goliath of Gath, a nine-foot tall giant. Goliath mocked God and Israel and demanded one Israelite soldier face him in one on one combat. Whosever champion died would be servants to the other side. Goliath issued this challenge for forty days (1 Samuel 17:8-11,16).

At the end of the forty days, David comes into the Israelite camp to deliver some food for his brothers. As David arrives, Goliath comes forward and issues his challenge again. David hears this and is amazed at what he hears. He, then, asks the men around him, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Sam. 17:26b).

This account does not directly state David became angry when he heard Goliath's challenge. But I believe his question about Goliath signals he is experiencing a righteous indignation. He sees an enemy attacking God with his insults. Also, David notices how no one has stepped forward to take Goliath's challenge. As John Mittelstaedt explains, "David found it

hard to believe that no one had stepped forward to defend the honor of God.”⁸⁰ David recognizes God’s holiness and honor were being threatened, but he is shocked no one else see this. Thus, I see David having a righteous anger in asking his question—one that would lead him to defend God’s honor and kill Goliath.

Jesus: The Perfect Model

Ultimately, our perfect model of righteous anger is our Lord Jesus. As true God and true man, Jesus lived the perfect life no one on earth since the Fall could ever live. This also means he experienced and correctly handled his emotions, including anger. When Jesus experienced anger, it was always in defense of his holiness and love. One very notable example from his life particularly stands out.

Shortly after he changed the water into wine at Cana, Jesus goes down to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. As he goes into the temple, he sees many vendors in the temple selling cattle and doves and exchanging money. Jesus becomes furious at this, and he constructs a whip out of cords and begins to overthrow the tables and chasing the vendors out of the temple (John 2: 14,15). As he is driving the vendors away, he yells, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” (John 2:16).

Jesus did not express anger often, but this was an occasion where the situation demanded an angry response. The worshipers in the temple probably never realized it, but when they offered their sacrifices, they were offering it to Jesus himself. When Jesus sees the vendors selling their merchandise, he sees them as being distractions to worship, as being a distortion of the church’s purpose.⁸¹ Jesus, thus, is acting angrily in defense of his holiness, which includes

⁸⁰ John R. Mittelstaedt, *People’s Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 96.

⁸¹ Gary P. Baumler, *People’s Bible Commentary: John* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997), 45.

worship of who he is. He acts angrily to show his holiness and love are not things with which to be trifled.

Anger Applied, Part II: Lessons for Us

What do these biblical case studies mean for 21st Century Christians concerning anger? What lessons can be gained from learning these examples? The case studies demonstrate what a justified, righteous anger does and does not look like. They demonstrate how good intentions can be muddied by sinful actions (Moses and the Egyptian). They also show how threat to God's holiness deserve indignation and action (David and Jesus). What exactly, then, are the lessons to take away from these examples?

Encouragements for Handling Anger

Pray persistently for strength to control it. Experiencing anger is simply a part of life. No matter how much people want to deny it, they must admit they do become angry. But anger can become a dominating force in people's lives. It can control all their feelings and actions if given the opportunity to do so. However, like any other sinful vice, anger can be controlled. If Christians have some difficulty in controlling their anger, they most certainly should pray and ask the Lord to help them rein in their anger. Would it be as simple as praying for strength just once and then being able to perfectly control anger? Most assuredly no. The sinful nature knows our weaknesses and will try to use those against us. But by persistently praying for strength, Christians will be able to draw strength from God and his promises to better handle their anger.

Ask God for forgiveness when anger controls you. This may seem like a no-brainer, but anger can have a strong grip on people. In addition, as mentioned before, the sinful nature is always looking for ways to turn Christians' weaknesses against them. Because of this, every day Christians will wrestle with their sinful nature, and the sinful nature will win, as anger gets the better of Christians. It is, then, at that time that Christians should turn to God for forgiveness. While Christians may feel their anger (and their sins done in that anger) would be too much for

God to forgive, the beautiful truth is God's forgiveness is unconditional – he gladly forgives everyone who repents of their sins, including those of anger. God's promise to forgive will hopefully lead Christians to humbly repent of their sins of anger when they fall into sin.

Seek pastoral counseling for anger management. Anger, indeed, is a vice that can be brought under control. But if Christians are having a troublesome time learning how to control their anger, they should turn to their pastor for spiritual guidance in how to do so. It is never easy to ask for help because our sinful pride loves to think we can handle anything on our own. But Christians should not feel afraid to ask their pastor for help because that is part of the pastor's duties. The pastor's chief concern is providing appropriate spiritual care for his members, and counseling for anger falls under that concern. Also, the pastor would not be judgmental against a member struggling with a sin – he would provide clear, gospel-centric counsel and guidance when requested. Thus, Christians should hopefully feel comfortable asking their pastor for help in managing their anger.

Cautions for Handling Anger

Beware the devil's lies about anger. The devil is rightfully known as the “father of lies” (Jn. 8:44). He loves to tell people what they want to hear, even though he is leading away from the truth of God's Word. This fact could be clearly seen regarding anger. People like to let their anger out because it feels good. This is one of the many lies the devil tells Christians – that releasing anger externally is really the smart thing to do. However, this lie could lead Christians into sins against other people (more on that below). Another lie the devil tells is Christians do not need help for controlling their anger – they can handle it all on their own. But this could lead to serious issues (mental health illnesses, strained relationships, etc.) for Christians. This is why Christians must be aware of the devil and his lies. The devil is always looking to tear Christians

away from God. If not watchful for his attacks, the devil can lead Christians into sins of anger that could later drive them into despair.

Beware of the urge to take vengeance. Because of the sinful nature and the devil, people are naturally inclined to seek vengeance when someone has wronged them. But this need for vengeance can become an out-of-control inferno if left unchecked. When someone has been wronged and they become angry and desire retribution, that desire can add more fuel to the anger, allowing it to skyrocket. Samson clearly exhibits how vengeance can lead people on a destructive tear (although God did use Samson's actions done in retribution to break the Philistine control over the Israelites). Desiring vengeance has the power to transform people into destructive forces, perhaps even leading them down the path to hurt or harm people. One must be aware of this threatening power, for it could possibly take control of their lives.

Be careful not to take anger out on others. As stated above, anger can be misplaced. When that happens, it is very likely that anger could be misdirected toward people, with loved ones maybe being the primary recipients. It is not wrong to become angry at some sort of injustice or violation of God's holiness and love, but when the anger turns into actions and people then become the target, that is when things can really take a turn for the worse and relationships can be damaged as a result of misplaced anger. If anger is allowed to fester and cloud up the mind, then things can get out of hand and people could get hurt. This is something to especially avoid when becoming angry.

CONCLUSION

Is there such a thing as righteous anger? This was the question I undertook when I started this research. The phrase “righteous anger” has been bandied about in society for years, with people using almost as an excuse for why they become angry. But it made me wonder if the concept of righteous anger is an actual thing. My research yielded two major conclusions.

One conclusion is righteous anger does, indeed, exist. It mainly applies to when God becomes angry. God is holy and righteous—there is nothing evil associated with him at all. He also delights to show love to fallen sinners. When either his holiness is threatened, or his love is abused, then God does experience anger, for these two characteristics are defining features of who he is. Indeed, righteous anger does exist, for God can only experience righteous anger.

The second conclusion is Christians can experience righteous anger as well. Whenever Christians witness a violation of God’s holiness and will occurring, they would be justified if they become angry, as they seek to defend and preserve God’s honor. However, it is not easy to be righteously angry due to the sinful nature living inside Christians. The sinful nature often exerts its influence on Christian anger and warps it into something awful. But I firmly believe it is possible for Christians to experience righteous anger. Their love for God and his holy Word and will leads them to become angry at the things that would make God angry. If they can remember that simple point—be angry at this thing because it arouses God’s anger—then it is possible to have a righteous anger. This anger would not be a controlling inferno, but rather a guide that sharpens people to take appropriate, constructive action.

Bibliography

- Aland, B., K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C.M. Martini & B.M. Metzger, eds. *The Greek New Testament (Fifth Revised Edition)*. Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2014.
- Barton, Stephen C. “‘Be Angry But Do Not Sin’ (Ephesians 4:26a): sin and the emotions in the New Testament with special reference to anger.” *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 28 no 1 (Feb 2015): 21-39.
- Baumler, Gary P. *People’s Bible Commentary: John*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997.
- Chapman, Gary. *Anger: Taming a Powerful Emotion*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1999.
- Delitzsch, Franz. *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 1. Translated by Rev. Francis Bolton. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1884.
- Erickson, Millard P. *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998.
- Gibbs, Jeffrey A. *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture—Matthew 1:1-11:1*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006.
- Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce Waltke, ed. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.
- Hendricks, LaVelle, Sam Bore, Dean Aslinia, and Guy Morriss. “The Effects of Anger on the Brain and Body.” *National Forum Journal of Counseling and Addiction*, vol. 2, num. 1 (2013).
- Hendriksen, William. *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967.
- Kuske, Paul W. *People’s Bible Commentary: Numbers*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005.
- Krall, Ruth E. “Anger and an Anabaptist Feminist Hermeneutic.” *The Conrad Grebel Review*, 14 no 2 (Spr. 1996): 145-163.
- Lester, Andrew D. *Coping with Your Anger: A Christian Guide*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983.
- , “Toward a New Understanding of Anger in Christian Experience.” *Review & Expositor*, 78 no 4 (Fall 1981): 563-590.
- Leupold, H.C. *Exposition of the Psalms*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959.

Lewis, Dorothy Otnow, ed. *Vulnerabilities to Delinquency*. New York: Spectrum Medieval and Scientific Books, 1981.

Loo, Tristan. *What Causes Anger?* 2005.

Meyer, John P. "In the Image of God, Genesis 1." In *Our Great Heritage, vol. II*, ed. Lyle Lange. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991.

Mittelstaedt, John R. *People's Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005.

Plass, Ewald M. *What Luther Says: An Anthology*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959.

Pieper, Francis. *Christian Dogmatics, vol. II*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951.

----- . *Christian Dogmatics, vol. III*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953.

Ratzinger, Cardinal Joseph. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1994.

Smith, Timothy J. *Anger: Be Angry, Sin Not—A Book in the Pearls of Life Series*. Pearls of Life.net, 2018.

Tavris, Carol. *Anger, the Misunderstood Emotion*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.

Thielman, Frank. *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010.

Wendland, Ernst H. *People's Bible Commentary: Exodus*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005.

Winger, Thomas M. *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture—Ephesians*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015.

Wood, A. Skevington. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 11 (Ephesians—Philemon)*. Frank Gaebelein, ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978.