1. **A Different Pandemic**

If there is a word that the entire planet is tired of hearing right about now, it’s PANDEMIC.

This word has inundated our lives through the television, radio, print, and everyday conversation.

A pandemic is simply an epidemic that has spread to other countries and continents. And Epidemic is a disease, virus, or sickness that effects a large number of people in a particular area or community.

As the Covid-19 pandemic has ravaged through the nations of the earth, leaders in every sphere of society have called for a state of emergency to deal with the deadly virus.

Over the last 2 years, Covid-19 has not only negatively effected our physical bodies, but it has also uncovered and revealed an even more dangerous and destructive “virus” in the body of Christ – ANGER.

I’m not talking about righteous anger – the anger that flows from God’s loving heart towards any demonic thing that stands in the way of love. I’m not talking Godly indignation towards injustice, but rather unchecked anger in our hearts that festers and grows like a cancer – an unchecked anger fueled by negative emotions, expressed in word and deed towards our brothers and sisters.

Today I want to call for a “state of emergency” regarding this anger pandemic. Beloved, we must address this issue in our own lives because the stakes are so high. Jesus tells us in Matthew 5 that unchecked anger is the beginning of the spirit of murder. **If we do not confront anger in our lives, we will not fully live into the freedom and joy of the Kingdom of God** (Matt. 5:25-26).

But I’m Not an Angry Person

Anger can look like many things. Anger isn’t just a personality type. Anger is not an innocent byproduct of nationality. **Of course, we all have weaknesses in our lives, but Satan wants to turn our sinful weakness into strongholds of wickedness.**

Unrighteous anger can look like aggression, an overly-critical attitude, bitterness, biting sarcasm, argumentative spirit, jealousy and envy, verbal lashing, combativeness, hyper-competitive spirit, thirst for retaliation, addiction to punishment, controlling spirit, perpetual withdraw and disconnection, and even depression (which is anger internalized).

All of us have anger inside. The question is, are we learning to feel that anger in the embryonic stage, check that anger and confront it so that it does not destroy *us* from the inside and destroy *our relationships* on the outside?

Are we willing to call it what it is – sin – repent, and become intentional about dealing with it?

1. **Be Angry and Do Not Sin**

A preacher once said, “Anger is one letter away from danger.” The Bible often warns us of the dangers of anger.

 **(Jas. 1:20)***, Human anger does not produce the righteousness of God*

**(Ecc. 7:9)***, Do not be quick to anger, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.*

**(Ps. 37:8)***, Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret – it only*

*causes harm.*

**(Eph. 4:26,27)***,* **26** *“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath,* **27** *nor give place to the devil.*

In Ephesians 4, Paul is quoting from Psalm 4.

**(Ps. 4:4,5)***,* **4** *Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah* **5** *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.*

David gives us a helpful guide to deal with our anger. In these two short verses the Holy Spirit equips us with four steps to handling anger well. In these four steps, the first one takes place before the point of agitation. The next two, at the point of agitation, and the final one, after the point of agitation.

David tells us that **if we want to keep from sinning in our anger we must take stock, be quiet, get low, and let go.**

1. **Meditate Within Your Heart – Take Stock**

The first step in dealing with anger is to take stock. This happens on the front end, before the point of agitation. This simply means to ponder this subject matter; meditate on it; study it; become aware.

In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus warns us of the toxicity of anger. In this “Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus begins by giving us the “Blesseds.” Verses 3-12 are like the flowers in our garden – the garden of our heart.

In verses 21-48, Jesus makes us aware of the weeds that can grow in our garden and negatively effect the flowers.

In Matthew 6:1-18 Jesus gives us some nutrients and water that we can add to the soil to promote growth in the garden of our heart.

The very first “weed” mentioned in this sermon is anger.

**(Matt. 5:21-26)***,* **21** *You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.”* **22** *But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, “Raca!” shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, “You fool!” shall be in danger of hell fire.* **23** *Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,* **24** *leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come offer your gift.* **25** *Reconcile with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand your over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.* **26** *Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there will you have paid the last penny.*

When Jesus says, “You have heard it said…of old” He is referring to the 6th Commandment, “Thou shall not murder” [Ex. 20:13].

And when He says, “But I say to you…” He not replacing the 6th Commandment, but explaining the 6th commandment. The Pharisees were so concerned with the outer action, but Jesus was making them aware of the inner motivation. Bad fruits always have bad roots.

**The spirit of murder starts with unchecked anger.**

Unchecked anger, fueled by our negative emotions, leading to bitterness expressed through our words is the starting point of the spirit of murder.

The writer of Hebrews urges us to take stock - to look carefully at our own lives.

**(Heb. 12:15)***, looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.*

Two words in the previous verses stand out:

1. Prison
2. Defiled

When we do not deal quickly and fully with anger, we create a sort of polluted prison cell in which we live bound and contaminated by sin. But Jesus came that we might have life abundantly.

Others see our anger issues far sooner than we do. That’s why it’s important to take stock, meditate and ponder within our hearts.

**(Ps. 139:23,24)***,* **23** *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxieties;* **24** *And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

1. **Be Still - Be Quiet**

The next step in dealing with anger happens at the point of agitation – be still.

**(Ps. 4:4,5)***,* **4** *Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah* **5** *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.*

The Hebrew word for “be still” is *daman* which means to grow silent or to be quiet.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 5 that **we tread on dangerous ground when our mouths become an instrument of contempt, judgement, and insult.**

**(Matt. 5:22), …***And whoever says to his brother, “Raca!” shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, “You fool!” shall be in danger of hell fire.*

“Raca” and “fool” are insults that like unto calling someone brainless, idiot, or imbecile.

It’s not the actual word “fool” that we should be caught up on. It’s the heart behind it.

 **(Matt. 12:34)***, …for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*

When confronted with our own unrighteous anger in a situation we should be slow to speak, quick to listen – be still.

**(Jas. 1:19)***, So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.*

When we speak ill of and belittle our brothers and sisters in Christ, we place ourselves above them as judge – that we are a reliable judge of their value to God.

Someone once said that anger is a condition where the mouth works faster than the brain.

Though that may not be scientifically true, it makes a good point.

When Abraham Lincoln was angry at someone he would write what he called a “hot letter.” In this letter, he would get out all of his angry words and thoughts. He would set this letter to the side for a time. Once he cooled off he would write another more level-headed letter.

It’s important to understand that words hurt, words wound, words carry life and death.

**(Pro. 18:21)***, Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.*

There is a difference between finding a healthy and safe place to process your anger, and blowing up at the object of your anger. Storing up and blowing up just to “get if off your chest” or “get it over with” is not healthy, safe, or life-giving.

There is certainly a time to speak up and speak out about injustice. But there is a difference between anger-words and justice-words.

Anger-words target the individual. Justice-words target the injustice. Anger-words come from the flesh, while justice-words come from the Spirit. Anger-words spew hate, while justice-words sow love. Anger-words divide, while justice-words unite. Anger-words trigger, while justice-words transform.

With our mouths we must operate in the opposite spirit of the spirit murder – life.

Find the redemptive qualities in those who come against you. Speak, declare, and pray that redemptive quality. Speak life, not death.

1. **Offer the Sacrifices of Righteousness – Get Low**

The third step in dealing with our anger also happens at the point of agitation.

**(Ps. 4:4,5)***,* **4** *Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah* **5** *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.*

What are the sacrifices of righteousness?

**(Ps. 51:17)***, The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart – these, O God, You will not despise.*

In other words, get low. Humility is a wet blanket that smothers anger. Much of anger comes from a desire to be in control - pride. Humility releases control and leans into God, who is the One that is ultimately in control.

 **(Pro. 15:1)***, A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

Angry words stir up more anger. Anger seeks to put others down so that we can feel elevated. But humility races to the low place so that God can lift us up.

 **(Jas. 4:10)***, Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*

Jesus instructs us to humble ourselves and go to our brother/sister quickly and make things right.

**(Matt. 5:23-25) 23** *Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,* **24** *leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come offer your gift.* **25** *Reconcile with your adversary quickly…*

It takes humility to go to someone that you’ve wounded with your angry words and say, “I have sinned against you. I repent. Please forgive me. I love you, and I don’t want to lose connection with you.”

Jesus also connects the use of our tongue in worship/pray with the use of our tongue against one of His children.

*“Our union with Jesus in worship is deeply connected to our honor of others…It is impossible to be God’s child without being a brother or sister to His other children, for whom Jesus died.”*

-Mike Bickle

When angry at another it is helpful to remember the way God treats us in our weakness and treat others in the same manner. God is gracious to us, compassionate, slow to anger, and overflowing with love.

**(Ps. 145:8)***, The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.*

When we are walking in humility – getting low – we don’t have to win every argument, prove every point, or express every opinion.

Humility is the way of peace. Meekness (which is power under control) is the way of Jesus.

Throughout Scripture we are urged to act in the opposite spirit of the spirit of the age. We combat darkness with light. We combat evil with good. We fight from our knees. We are lifted up when we bow down low. God’s kingdom is an inside-out upside-down kingdom.

**(Rom. 12:14-21)***,* **14** *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.* **15** *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.* **16** *Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.* **17** *Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.* **18** *If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.* **19** *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance in Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.* **20** *Therefore, “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”* **21** *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

1. **Put Your Trust in the Lord – Let Go**

The fourth step in dealing with anger takes place after the point of agitation.

**(Ps. 4:4,5)***,* **4** *Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah* **5** *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.*

To put your trust in the Lord simply means to – in the words of the great Princess Elsa – LET IT GO!

**(Eph. 4:26,27)***,* **26** *“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath,* **27** *nor give place to the devil.*

It is really important that we do not hold on to our anger. Prolonged anger turns to bitterness and hatred. Anger is for a time. We feel anger inside. Then we deal with it quickly so that it doesn’t grow, fester, and defile. Do not let anger find a comfortable resting place in your heart. We want to live in such a way that anger finds us to be a very inhospitable host.

**(Heb. 12:15)***, looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.*

Don’t hold grudges. Holding on to grudges is holding on to your anger. **You have not properly dealt with your anger if you still hold a grudge.** Grudges feed disconnection, while forgiveness and mercy feed connection. Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive a brother for a wrong-doing and Jesus replied “seventy times seven.”

1. **Overview**

Anger is a is a serious deal in the Kingdom. It’s a dangerous virus that can bind and defile our spirit.

It’s important to recognize anger and deal swiftly with it before it spreads in our hearts.

One of the ways to deal properly with anger is to follow the instructions of David and Jesus –

1. Take Stock
2. Be Quiet
3. Get Low
4. Let Go

As we take stock of our own hearts, ask the Lord to reveal to you anyone that you have wounded by your angry words. Have you expressed your anger to or about someone? Today is the day to make it right.

Go to them quickly. Make it right. Don’t sugarcoat it. Call it what it is. Face it head on.

If you don’t know what to do or say, you can start here:

-I have sinned against you in my anger.

-I repent before you and God.

-I receive God’s forgiveness and I ask for yours.

-I love you with the love of the Lord as a brother/sister.

-I don’t want to lose connection with you .

-I value you and your God-given role in my life.

-My I pray a prayer of blessing over you.

Amen, let’s stand 😊