

Living in The Overflow of God's Love

Love is not easily angered

You know the story of the two brothers. A quick look would not reveal anything unusual about these two guys. Of course they are siblings. And we know that siblings can have their differences from time to time. Who knows-- one of the boys could have been more like mom and the other more like dad. One may have had a bent for livestock while the other enjoyed farming. Besides some of these differences, they probably would have seemed to have a lot of similarities. They lived in the same culture, and were raised in the same family and worshipped the same God.

So why did one of these boys kill the other? What led to one brother to turn on the other enough to take his life? Why did Cain kill his brother Abel?

I recall the words of Jesus: "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." **Matthew 5:21,22**

So why did Cain kill his brother? We'll have to look a little closer at what the Bible shows us. What emerges from the act of murder is really the question of anger. "But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast." **Genesis 4:4,5**

Listen carefully-- anger in and of itself is not sin. If it were, God would be guilty of sin. The emotion of anger was God's idea. God's word tells us " "Be angry but do not sin" **Eph. 4:26a RSV.**

Righteous Anger

Matt 21:12-13 Jesus, the temple and the money changers

Our anger doesn't have to lead us to shed blood in order to be tagged sinful. But does your anger make you irritable, touchy, quick-tempered, quick to take offense? Are you easily provoked or easily angered? Does your anger lead you to fly off the handle? These words are not my words. These words are Paul's words. Paul tells us what love is not:

NLT- Love is not irritable

TLB- Love is not touchy

CEV- Love isn't... quick tempered

NEB- Love is not... quick to take offense.

KJV- Love is not... easily provoked

NIV- Love is not... easily angered

MSG- Love... Doesn't fly off the handle

Cain was all of these and more. Have you ever wondered why? The Bible really does tell us why you know. Read with me again Gen 4:4-5 *“But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.”*

God accepted Abel’s gift, and did not accept Cain’s gift. In other words, God accepted Abel and did not accept Cain. Cain becomes angry and feels rejected.

It is here in Genesis that we see the first account of anger. And if you look at your bible, you find it another 400 or so times. However, anger rarely travels alone. Typically **Anger** is yoked with **Rejection**.

Notice this couple (**Anger & Rejection**) in the following stories:

Jonah- this guy has a “Whale of a problem with anger.”

- Jonah has no good feelings for the Ninevites, and believes they are not worthy of God’s mercy. But God sees things differently!
- When God forgives the Ninevites he rejects Jonah’s opinion... **Jonah 4:1** *“But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry.”* (NASB)

David- His work was also rejected by God. David’s decision to move the Ark of the Covenant by cart didn’t go over well with God. You remember what happened to Uzzah? Uzzah touched what he shouldn’t have touched and God struck him dead-- just like that! (**2 Sam. 6:7**)

- Watch David-- he becomes angry with God because of God’s rejection.

Saul- He was rejected by his own people. When the people choose their heroes, they choose the ruddy David over their appointed King. Saul’s response? He became violent.

“And it happened as they were coning, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments. And the women sang as they played, and said, “Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands.” Then Saul became very angry...” **1 Sam. 18:6-8a NASB**

The Son’s of Jacob- Jacob’s sons were rejected by their father. Joseph was daddy’s boy and everyone knew it. How did this over? The brothers were angry! **Gen. 37:4**.

I know that there are many other things that cause us to be angry. Things like impatience, unmet expectations, the stress of daily living and the stupidity on the highway! But I see the bible showing us that the big one is rejection.

Rejection in a store

Rejection from a parent

Rejection from a spouse

If rejections from people make us angry, what happens when we feel rejected by God?

Look at Cain. We know enough to recreate a good part of the crime scene. Cain and Abel went to worship, maybe even at the same time. They each bring their offering. Obviously they were instructed to do so, and therefore bring an offering.

Out of obedience, Abel brings the best of a first born from his flock and offers it to God.

But when Cain brings some food from the ground, he acts in disobedience. Therefore, God rejects Cain's sacrifice. But God shows up on the scene and gives Cain fair warning. **"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 master it." Genesis 4:6,7, NIV.**

Evidently at this point Cain has not yet sinned. All Cain needs is a little humility. But Cain has different plans. And you know the rest of the story Gen. 4:8- Cain kills Abel.

It's tough when you give up. Cain had given up on God. Cain gave up on his ability to please God. And he took it out on Abel.

I wonder what Cain would say if we could talk to him about what he was feeling. He might say something like: "I can't satisfy him. I work hard in the fields and bring in my crops. I give God my best, and it's not good enough."

I wonder what some of us might say in the midst of our anger:

"Why won't God hear my prayers? We go to church, we pay our bills, but still the crib is empty."

"Why won't God give me a job? I've done nothing wrong. People who curse him and disobey Him have jobs, but I don't! I've served God all these years and can't even get an interview."

My sister said to me regarding her cancer- "I don't get it, I don't drink or smoke, yet I have cancer."

It's times like this that we can get pretty hot around the collar. If so, perhaps we've discovered the cause for a lot of our anger. Could it be that your anger is a result of a feeling of divine rejection? If this is the cause of your anger the good news is there's a cure for it.

If rejection causes anger, wouldn't acceptance cure it?

- If rejection from God makes you mad at others, wouldn't acceptance from God stir your love for them?
- Do you remember the first lesson in this series... **Luke 7:47 "He who is forgiven little loves little"**

I like the suggestion Max Lucado makes about this passage. He suggests that we can replace the word forgiven with the word accepted and still maintain the integrity of the passage. **"He who is accepted little loves little."**

If we think God is harsh and unfair, do you care to guess how we'll treat people? There's a saying that goes: **"Hurt people hurt people."** But if we discover that God has drenched us with unconditional love, would that make a difference?

I think Paul would say so. Paul went from a bully to a nice teddy bear. Paul, B.C. (Before Christ) burned with anger.

- In Acts 8:3 [NAS]- Paul ravaged the church

But we can also see that Paul A.D. (After Discovery) overflowed with love. In Romans 9:1-3 Paul says that he could wish that he **“were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of his brethren... according to the flesh.”**

Paul’s accusers and enemies mistreated him, beat him, stoned him for dead, jailed him and mocked him. **(Acts 13:4-5, 14:1, 17:1-2, 10)**. Now, can you find anywhere in the Word where Paul retaliates and hurts back? No! because this is a different man.

- **Paul’s anger is gone**
- **Paul’s passion is strong**
- **Paul’s devotion is unquestioned**

What made the difference for Paul was his encounter with Jesus. Paul’s way of expressing this encounter with Jesus is found in Col. 3:3 NIV- **“Your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”**

You know what this means right? In Christ, God has accepted you.

- We don’t live under the frown of God!
- The Prophet Zephaniah says of God’s children 3:17

**The LORD your God is with you,
He is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you,
He will quiet you with his love,
He will rejoice over you with singing."**

“You can not keep people from rejecting you, but you can keep rejections from enraging you.”

- I’m sorry to say, but rejections come with the journey.
 - You’re gonna get cut off, and dished, and dropped and kicked around
 - But the way you can keep rejections from enraging you are by letting God’s acceptance compensate for their rejection.

Consider this modern parable-

In your house is this beautiful lone flower. And today you plan to wear this flower. It’s a special day. But as soon as you leave the house, people start picking petals off your flower.

- Someone steals your parking spot at Wal-Mart even though you had your blinker on first! **(Petals picked)**
- A co-worker falsely blames you for something not getting don. **(Petals picked)**
- The promotion is given to someone with less experience than you. **(Petals picked)**

I mean by the end of the day you’re down to one pedal. And woe to the one who dares to draw near it! You’re only one pedal snatching away from a blow-up.

But let’s change the scenario a little:

- The kind man who lives next to you runs a flower shop.
- Every night on the way home this man gives you a fresh, undeserved bouquet of flowers.
- These are not leftover flowers... they are the top of the line!
- You don’t know why he thinks so highly of you, but you’re not complaining.

•Because of this man's gifts to you, your house smells sweet and your step has bounce!
Let someone mess with your flower-- you have a basketful to replace it!

The interpretation is obvious!

•God has flowers for you... take them and when rejection comes you won't be left short-petaled.

So this morning:

- Do you think God could heal your angry heart?
- Do you want him to?
 - Not everyone does.
- You may be addicted to anger
- You may be a rage junkie
- Anger may be a part of your identity.
- But if you want him to, he can change your identity.
- Do you want him to? (You cannot do it alone)

But with Christ, all things are possible.

- Bring your anger to the cross
- Leave your anger at the cross of Calvary
- When others reject you let God accept you.

Come, drink deeply from the limitless love of God and cool down.

Today, live in the overflow of God's love.

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