

# “ANGER IS A REAL PROBLEM”

Text: Matthew 5:21-26

By Pastor YAU

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## INTRODUCTION:

1) The fact of being angry: I hope we all are honest, at least on this subject, that we all have had times when we were angry, or very angry. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to know that everyone, including very little ones, has times of anger. If you have little ones at home or help in the church nursery, you know what I mean: Some little ones can cry for hours until they can't take a breath. Little kids will destroy toys or hit other kids when they are angry. Angry adults have killed people and were sent to prison for years, if not executed. Many tragic killings at home, at workplaces or even in churches are because of uncontrolled anger. In less serious conditions, many suffer fatigue or mental stress because they are unable to relieve themselves from anger. We all know that anger is the outward explosion of inner emotional stress that finds no other way to channel it, in proper ways.

2) Anger is a serious matter: Most of us don't see anger as a serious matter in our life. Yes, we know it is there, and we know it isn't a good thing. But few people take it seriously enough to confront it and find ways to handle it properly. On the other hand, we know how anger had destroyed relationships at home, in marriages, at work, among friends, colleagues, relatives and so on. We try to see anger as a bad “thing,” not realizing that usually it isn't about things, but about someone, and if anger isn't handled properly, that someone becomes the object or target of your hatred or revenge. Anger is important enough that Jesus included it in

his famous Sermon on the Mount. (Matt 5-7)

THE DANGER OF ANGER: “You have heard that it was said to the people of long ago: Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subjected to judgment.” (Matthew 5:21)

1) This part we know: “Thou shalt not murder.” (Ex 20:13, KJV) This is something we all know both in criminal law and spiritual law. We also know the consequences of committing murder. In a normal mind, most of us don't dare kill someone even if we hate him or her very much. This is so partly because killing is such a violent act that most of us are incapable of doing it when we are in our right mind. The other part is we are afraid of the consequence of doing it. So, law and punishment still serve its purpose in preventing people from committing this most hideous crime.

2) This part we don't know: We all know and agree that the act of murder should be subject to punishment. Most of us don't know or agree that being angry with someone is also subject to the same punishment, but that is exactly what Jesus said here. The act of murder is a crime that will be punished, but Jesus includes the emotion of hatred toward a brother as also punishable. This is true because if one cherishes and harbors anger and hatred, allowing that to occupy his heart, sooner or later he will kill, murder, that object of his anger. This Sept. 14, a professor at Delta University in Cleveland, Mississippi, killed one of his colleagues, and possibly a woman, in a possible love triangle relationship. When anger boils out into hatred and it isn't put under control, murder is what could happen next. All you need to do is read the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:3-8.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF ANGER: “But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.” (5:22)

1) Anger always has a human object: Many people argue that when they explode with their emotions, they are angry not against a person but to protect a principle or something of importance. The fact is no matter what they may say, the object of their anger is always a person or groups of people: We are angry with someone or ones, and that someone usually is close to us. We see many people who are usually very nice to outsiders but very mean to their family, and their anger is so strong against those in the family. No wonder Jesus said we are angry against our brothers or sisters, those who are so close to us either in a natural family or in the family of God, the church. In the height of emotion, we blast with contempt at those who love us as family. *Raca*, Aramaic, means nothing or empty; while *mo-re*, Greek, means stupid. They are words to degrade those whom our anger is poured out on. Speaking them is an act of insult on their dignity, character, value and all the good things about them. We effectively wipe out the value of their life and all their qualities and potential..

2) Anger always comes from a twisted mind: We all agree that when we are angry, we lose the ability to have a balanced mind to say the right thing or make the right decision because our normal capacity was overshadowed by our emotion. In the KJV, the translation is like this: “Whosoever is angry with his brother without just cause shall be in danger of judgment.” “Just cause” is the condition we need to justify being angry. Many times we get angry with someone without just cause,

without a correct reason or proper basis. This is so because at the moment of anger, we can only think of our own reason, purpose or position, and not that of the person we are angry with. We look only to our own interest, not to that of the other side. If we are able to exercise our normal mental capacity, chances are we won't get angry so easily.

### THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF ANGER:

1) Don't whitewash the sin of anger: “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has ought against you...” (5:23) Many of us would classify sins into two main categories. The first has serious sins like murder, adultery, idol worship, sins so serious that we know they will hinder our relationship with God. The second has lesser sins like hatred, anger, jealousy, slander, greed, etc. We think being angry with others should not be serious and that it won't interfere with our relationship with God. We are so wrong. Jesus listed anger with murder in his teaching here in Matthew 5:21-26. Anger is serious enough to interfere with our offering gifts (material or services) to God: We cannot give anything or serve God in any way if we don't resolve the sin of anger with our brothers and sisters.

2) See anger the right way: “Ought” (KJV) is from Greek, *exei ti*, or “something” in NIV. The Greek words carry the idea of “hidden grievances or even hatred.” The Chinese translate it as “holding deeply rooted grudges or hatred” against you. This is equivalent to bitterness or poison. We read and see many cases of violence like murder as the outward burst of the inner poison of hatred. To Jesus this is so serious that it even hinders our best action of offering gifts to

God. Here is the biblical principle: Do not minimize the harm of anger between you and your brother in God's church or anywhere else. It is a very serious matter that could neutralize or render your dedication of service and your spiritual life meaningless or ineffective if you don't resolve it before you come to serve God.

THE SOLUTION TO ANGER: “Leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift. Settle quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to a judge, and the judge may hand you over to an officer, and you may be thrown into prison.” (5:24-25)

1) Resolve with proper attitude: “To reconcile”, *dia-llegatai*, means to initiate a mutual concession with each other—to have the heart of making peace with each other. This is the foundation of resolving all conflicts: to have a humble attitude, to seek peace with the other person. It takes the spirit of humility to do this. One major factor that causes small conflicts to explode into huge fights is the sin of self-righteousness: I am right, he is wrong, so I don't need to take the first step to make peace with him. The word Jesus used is an imperative that means we don't have a choice but must take the first step to seek peace.

2) Resolve with proper action: “Settle” (NIV), *ennoos* in Greek, means be kind and friendly, better translated “agree with.” After you have the proper attitude to seek peace, you need to take action to do it in a kind and friendly manner. Oftentimes, it means to pay for the wrong you have done,

whether in words or deeds to “mend the broken fence.” This is so if you are the offender. In the case when you are the offended, you also need to have that kind, friendly attitude to want to make peace with your adversary. You need to accept his apology, his good will, before things get out of hand and cause harm to both of you. Regardless, in whatever situation, it is imperative that both sides try to resolve all grievances before they become major conflicts.

### STEPS WE ALL CAN TAKE:

1) See anger as a serious problem: If anger is a spark, it can become a firestorm that could consume properties and lives if it isn't extinguished quickly. In all relationships, anger is the main cause of much damage and destruction. We need to take proper actions, be willing to pay for damages we have caused and seek peace with each other. Harboring anger could increase the chances of causing more serious consequences we first didn't imagine. God sent his Son Jesus to path the way so we can reconcile with God himself. We need to be willing to pay the price to make peace with one another: be it your pride or your face or any other price. Do it before it's too late.

2) See anger as a long-term prison: “Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence (from there, the prison) till thou hast paid uttermost farthing.” (5:26, KJV) Harboring anger is like keeping yourself in an emotional prison. Until you are willing to pay all that you owe to make peace with your adversary, you can't get out of that torturing, tormenting emotional, spiritual prison. This means you won't be free from your emotional bondage, from the bitterness in

your heart, or even the hatred in your soul, and that all these could keep you from being free to live, to serve, to enjoy life to the fullest extent. Please do yourself a big favor: Bring your anger to God, and ask him to forgive you. Then bring the issue to that other person and do all you can in a kind and friendly way to seek peace, to pay the price, to settle the