

On Divine Anger

Deuteronomy 6:14-15 New American Standard Bible (1995 NASB)

¹⁴You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, ¹⁵for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.

Exodus 34:6 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

*Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and merciful, **slow to anger**, and abounding in faithfulness and truth;*

Micah 7:18 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

*Who is a God like You, who pardons wrongdoing
And passes over a rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?
He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy.*

Introduction

Pop Quiz: What does “Testament” mean, particularly in relation to the Old and New Testaments? In the Bible, testament means “Covenant.” The Old Testament is the old covenant. The New Testament means the new covenant. A biblical covenant is a spiritual contract/relationship agreed upon by two parties: God and His people.

Before discussing divine anger, it is crucial to understand that we are in a covenant relationship with God. This covenant comes with mutual commitment and expectations: God commits to being our protector and provider, while we are called to remain loyal and obedient to His commandments. When we feel that God has not fulfilled His promise of protection and provision, we may become frustrated or angry with Him. Likewise, God experiences righteous anger when we fail to remain faithful to Him. Always remember—our relationship with God is a two-way covenant.

In the past two Sundays I talked about human anger in two sermons: first, about our anger at God, I introduced three ways to handle it: Avoid bad theology. Be humble in your anger. Choose to trust in God not your own feelings (Romans 8:28). Last Sunday, I talked about how to control our anger at each other: S.L.O.W. Slow to anger (be compassionate); Let go and let God (forgive); Overcome evil with good (bless); Work it out (reconciliation).

Today, I want to talk about divine anger. While Scripture mentions human anger around 80 times, it refers to God's anger approximately 310 times. Ignoring such a significant

emphasis would be unwise. If the Bible speaks about divine anger nearly four times more than human anger, it's clear that we should pay close attention to it.

Content

Let's begin by debunking a common myth about divine anger.

Myth #1: God is an Angry God.

This misconception portrays God as harsh and unyielding—a "God of terror," "God of judgment," or "God of jealousy," especially in the Old Testament. Some imagine Him as a wrathful God, ready to strike us down at the slightest mistake. This misunderstanding often stems from our own experiences—perhaps shaped by strict or unpredictable earthly fathers—or from sermons that emphasize judgment without balancing it with God's love and mercy.

The problem is that we don't always test our beliefs against Scripture. We hear about God's anger but rarely study the reasons behind it. Instead, we project human imperfections onto our heavenly Father, assuming He is as unpredictable or unreasonable as flawed earthly fathers.

But the truth is this: God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in loving-kindness and truth (Exodus 34:6). He is patient, delights in mercy, and does not hold onto His anger forever. Instead, He forgives, offers countless chances, and works patiently to transform our character. If God is ever angry, it is always with good reason, rooted in His justice, righteousness, love, and desire to lead us back to Him.

Myth #2: God Never Gets Angry with Us.

This myth suggests that because God is love and full of grace, He accepts everyone unconditionally and never gets angry, no matter what we do. It implies that He never holds us accountable for our actions or words. The key word here is "NEVER"—and that is simply not true nor biblical.

Such a view of God is just as misleading as the idea of Him being only wrathful. While it is true that God is love, He is also a God of truth, justice, and righteousness. He grieves when His children stray from His ways and disregards His truth. He is displeased when we act and speak in ways that are evil in His sight (Deuteronomy 31:29). And He does not hesitate to make His displeasure known.

It's time that we embraced a balanced, biblical understanding of who God is and why He gets angry. You deserve to know the truth, and I have the responsibility to teach it from the Bible. God's anger is not reckless or irrational—it is always righteous, just, and aimed at leading us back to Him.

This morning, we will explore God's Word to uncover the true nature of God as revealed first in the Old Testament and then in the New Testament. Specifically, we will examine what stirs God to anger and how His anger can be appeased. My prayer is that by the end of this sermon, we will have a deeper understanding that the Lord our God is truly slow to anger—and that we must be mindful to avoid the things that provoke His wrath.

God in the Old Testament:

Israel, God's chosen people, held a special place in His heart. Out of all the nations on earth, the LORD set them apart as His treasured possession (Deuteronomy 7:6). They were a holy people, bound to Him in a covenant in which He promised to provide for and protect them. In return, they were called to worship and serve Him alone.

However, for centuries—across multiple generations—Israel repeatedly provoked God to anger through rebellion, grumbling, and disobedience. It wasn't just a few individuals or a single generation; time and again, leaders and people alike turned away from Him. Figures such as Solomon, and many of the kings who followed fell into disobedience.

Yet, despite their failures, God persistently called His people to repentance, making it clear what provoked Him to anger. One particular offense stood out above the rest: idol worship. This sin was likened to spiritual adultery—just as a wife betrays her husband by seeking other men. Israel, God's beloved, chasing after false gods, turned her back on the One who had rescued and sustained her (1 Kings 14:9). Such act broke God's heart and provoked Him to anger.

Even today, the same God warns us to steer clear of worshiping other gods. While we often associate idols with carved or molten images, idolatry goes beyond physical statues. Anything that takes priority over God in our lives becomes an idol. Idols can take many forms—greed, covetousness, television, the internet, video games, addictions, food, pornography, money, fame, knowledge, or even relationships. Anything that captures our hearts more than God does can lead us away from Him.

Another thing that angered God was grumbling rooted in people's lack of gratitude for His provision. Instead of trusting in His care, they constantly complained about not having enough. In other words, grumbling against God stirs His anger.

Additionally, mistreating or oppressing orphans, widows, and foreigners also provokes God's wrath (Exodus 22:24). Whenever His people acted unjustly toward the powerless and vulnerable in society, they stirred His righteous anger.

God in the New Testament:

In this new covenant, God has chosen and called believers in Christ to be His own people. Just as He did with Israel in the Old Testament, Jesus has set us apart as His treasured possession (Titus 2:14). We are a holy people in Him—saints in Christ.

In this special covenantal relationship, God provides for our needs and protects us. In return, He expects us to keep His commandments in Jesus. When we fail to do so, it grieves both Jesus and God.

For example, Jesus would be angered by our hypocrisy, just as He was with the religious leaders of His time. He would condemn commercialism in the church today, just as He drove the moneychangers out of the Temple. He would also be displeased if we belittle or neglect children among us. His heart would grieve when we remain stubborn—refusing to obey God—or when we persist in unbelief.

There you have it.

Now, let's explore how we can appease God's anger.

Three Ways to Appease God's Anger:

1. Humble Yourself.

When God reveals that you are doing something displeasing to Him, respond with humility. Fall to your knees and acknowledge your wrongdoing. A powerful example of this is King Rehoboam, Solomon's son. He was unfaithful to the Lord (that is, worshiped idols) and abandoned His law (2 Chronicles 12:1-2). As a result, God allowed King Shishak of Egypt to invade Jerusalem and plunder its treasures (v. 5, 9). However, when Rehoboam humbled himself before God, the Lord's anger turned away from him (v. 7, 12).

2. Repent. Repentance is more than simply stopping sin; it means returning to God. The Hebrew meaning of repentance emphasizes a wholehearted turning back to Him. As the Lord declares, "If you repent, I will restore you" (Jeremiah 15:19) and "Repent and live" (Ezekiel 18:32). True repentance not only acknowledges wrongdoing but also reorients our hearts and actions toward God.

3. Intercede for Others.

We can also appease God's anger on behalf of others through sincere intercession. Moses, for example, pleaded with God on behalf of Israel, and the Lord relented from bringing disaster upon them (Exodus 32:11-14). Similarly, Psalm 85 is a prayer for the restoration of a nation. As believers, we have a responsibility to lift up our loved ones and communities in prayer, making earnest and humble pleas for God's mercy. Personally, I make it a daily commitment to pray for our congregation, seeking God's grace and favor over His people.

Conclusion

Christ: a Global Scale of Appeasing God's Anger on Humanity (The Ultimate Atonement for Humanity).

The bottom line is this: Certain things provoke God's anger—idol worship, murder, lies, cheating, and more. God clearly outlined these in the Ten Commandments. Ideally, no one would break them, but the reality is that we all do. The act of breaking God's law is called sin. We are born with a sinful nature, and sin not only stirs God's anger but also separates us from His holy presence.

When we sin, God desires repentance and restoration of our relationship with Him. However, no matter how hard we try or how good we think we are, our own efforts will never be sufficient to save us from His righteous anger. That's why God, in His infinite mercy and wisdom, provided the ultimate solution. He sent His only Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for our sins once and for all. Through Christ's sacrifice on the cross, God's anger is forever appeased, and all who believe in Jesus are reconciled with God and granted eternal life.

Simply put, Christ's sacrifice has made peace between us and God—all for you and me. Thanks be to God!

May God help us to live in a way that honors Him and never provokes His anger.

Let us pray.

Notes: The phrase "slow to anger" appears 14 times in the Bible. Nine instances, all in the Old Testament, describe it as an attribute of the LORD. The remaining five—four in Proverbs and one in James—present it as a virtue of wisdom for man.