

Untamed Anger

Hebrews 12: 12 - 17

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In Genesis 25 to 27, we read about Isaac and Rebecca and how they knew God had chosen the younger brother Jacob ahead of Esau to be the head of the family. However, Isaac favored Esau and that brought friction within the family. Esau grows to be a wild and hot-tempered man. When he came home tired and hungry from hunting and saw Jacob cooking stew, he sold his birthright to his brother in exchange for the stew. Years later, Isaac ends up blessing Jacob ahead of Esau conforming God's will unintentionally. Isaac's mistake was God's means of getting His will done as Jacob was God's choice from the beginning. As Esau developed a grudge against Jacob and wanted to kill him, we see a perfect example of a life driven by anger.

1. What Anger is?

Esau was sexually immoral, godless and bitter. Being godless is secular and refers to a person who is focused on the immediate and the now. Anger is tied to our focus - what we focus on is what we love the most. Anger is that which rouses you and rallies all your faculties to defend that which you ultimately love. The level of anger you experience will always correspond to the level of love you hold for someone or something. You get angry when that which you love is threatened. God gets angry at sin because He loves holiness and righteousness. Anger is not a sin, as the bible says, 'be *angry but do not sin*'. There are right things Christians can be

angry about and it pushes them to champion the ways of the Lord.

2. How to handle anger?

A) Be aware of the anger in your life.

The writer of Hebrews calls bitterness a root. Roots are invisible – likewise we often do not want to admit we are angry people. We keep denying the anger in us, we don't believe it ourselves and sweep it under the carpet. We say we have forgiven, but we fail to address the root that still exists. This constricts our hearts and even affects our physical and mental health. One of the fruits of bitterness is a cynical spirit. Our bitterness towards people who have wronged us keeps us from the one place where we can be strengthened spiritually, i.e., the Church. Be aware of your anger, be willing to admit it and be willing to see it.

B) Be willing to be 'God-full' instead of godless

Godlessness is plain wicked pride against God's grace. Ask yourself 'What am I defending?' when you find yourself dealing with anger. We get upset and begin to defend our love for sin and pride. In Jeremiah 45:5, God tells Baruch, "...do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not...". We would be constantly angry and upset if we regard worldly goals above the Lord Himself. Think about the power of the gospel every day and seek His righteousness.

C) Know that grace and anger prevent each other

Grace and bitterness are antithesis to each other (Hebrews 12:15). Either your understanding of grace will put out your bitterness, or the bitterness will keep you from understanding grace. They cannot co-exist. When Jesus said, "It is finished", He paid our debts and finished the payment. What we owe God is so great we would never finish paying it. He forgave us. Do we forgive others? The only way our hearts stop asking for a payment for the wrongs people have done to us is to look at what we owe God. If we gaze at the beauty of Jesus and His cross, we can say 'as He forgave me, I forgive you'. If we don't understand and experience the grace of God, our bitter hearts will never heal. As Paul prayed in Ephesians 3: 17-19, let's be rooted and grounded in love and have strength to comprehend the depth of the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge. The way to do that is to get connected to the church community and learn to forgive and show grace.