

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## Be Angry and Do Not Sin

by Dan Trygg

**"Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity."** – Eph. 4:26,27

For those of us who have not understood the benefits of anger, or have not appreciated its "God-like" characteristics, the subject of anger makes us a bit uncomfortable. If we were raised in a cultural background, that has taught us that expressions of anger, or even the emotion of anger itself, were taboo, then we may have difficulty allowing ourselves to "get in touch" with our own anger in a clear and beneficial way. If we have spent most of our lives attempting to suppress, control, and even deny this emotion, then we can expect that we will find it somewhat strange to now "tune in" to those feelings. We may even find that our "tuner" needs some readjustment, because we don't clearly perceive the anger that we have. If our church background communicated to us that "being angry" was synonymous with a lack of self-control and was "unspiritual", then Paul's words to us here in Ephesians 4:26 are going to sound out of place, and will be hard for us to interpret and process clearly.

**The truth is that, for the sake of personal spiritual maturity and for the purpose of producing healthy, effective relationships in the Body of Christ, the apostle Paul was an advocate of healthy anger.** More than that, he expressly commands us to "be angry". Since there is no basis for the "yet" in the NASB rendering, "be angry and yet do not sin", the phrase actually may be teaching that **we will sin if we do not get angry!** In other words, Paul is trying to encourage the Ephesian Christians to make use of the motivations of a healthy anger to get things out in the open that need to be addressed. He is not qualifying anger, here, he is advocating its correct use. **He is not trying to "put a lid on anger", rather he wants Christians to "take the lid off" to examine and understand what the anger is there for, and to confront what needs confrontation.**

Even though there is much teaching in certain church circles that downplays, devalues, or even discourages "feeling emotions", a simple, cursory reading of the Bible should make us aware that emotions are very much a part of the nature and experience of God Himself. **Instead of rejecting emotions as bad, or dangerous, we should recognize that they are, in fact, one very important aspect of our "God-likeness".** Being created in the image of God not only means that we were made with an intellectual capacity to understand and communicate with God, or a volitional capacity by which we can choose to relate to Him and express His will in action. We also have been created with an emotional capacity, by which we can not only appreciate and experience God's goodness, but we can also become a means by which we can express God-like characteristics in relationships. Anger, and other emotions, are part of the marvelous way in which God created us to bear and express His image. **To disregard, or dis-employ, them is to hide, cover, and distort the likeness of God which we have been created to express.** This actually robs God of the "glory" (radiance, emanating representation, reputation) which He intends to be demonstrated and expressed through humanity. To strip us of our emotional qualities forces us to live at what is a sub-human level of existence. **We cannot accurately represent or glorify God without fully-functioning, healthy, expressive emotions. Anger is certainly one of them.**

### Three Types of Anger

**In the NT, there are three basic root words which are used to describe anger.** Briefly, they are:

(1.) **Orgē** (pronounced "or-gay"). Originally the word was used to describe any natural desire, impulse or disposition, but by NT times, it had come to refer to anger as the strongest of all passions. This noun form occurs some 36 times in the NT, 28 times of God's wrath toward sinful men - Matt. 3:7; Mk. 3:5; Lk. 3:7; 21:23; Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 2:5 (2x); 8:3; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22 (2x); 12:19; 13:4,5; Eph. 2:3, 4:31; 5:6; Col. 3:6,8; I Thess. 1:10; 2:16; 5:9; I Tim. 2:8; Heb. 3:11; 4:3; Jas. 1:19,20; Rev. 6:16,17; 11:18; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15. In addition, the verbal form, *orgizomai*, occurs on 8 more occasions, all descriptive of human anger - Matt. 5:22; 18:34; 22:7; Lk. 14:21; 15:28; Eph. 4:26; Rev. 11:18; 12:17. There is also an adjectival form, *orgilos*, which is found in Tit. 1:7. **Orgē refers to a mental bent or impulse to act against some invasion upon a person by another, or to act to right a wrong, or bring vengeance upon some injustice.**

(2.) **Thumos**, a noun, occurs 18 times in the NT - Lk. 4:28; Acts 19:28; Rom. 2:8; II Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; Heb. 11:27; Rev. 12:12; 14:8,10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 18:3; 19:15. In addition, a verbal form, *thumoō*, occurs once in Matt. 2:16. Of these, eight times it is used to describe the wrath of God poured out in explosive judgment at the end of the age. All other occurrences are presented as undesirable, though we must conclude that there at least *could be* a righteous, appropriate expression of this kind of anger, since God Himself will do so at the proper time.

{Interestingly, the most common word for patience in the NT is *makrothumia* (lit. "distance from explosive [*thumos*] anger). This is the word also used in the Greek Septuagint version of the OT to translate the quality of God's character rendered as "slow to anger". The Hebrew word for this actually means "long of nostrils", which again means "distance from explosive anger". }

The word, *thumos*, is derived from *thuo*, meaning "to rush". *Thumos* is, then, a strong passion or emotion which rushes upon, or out from, a person. (A derivative form, *epithumia* [lit. "a rushing upon"] is the word translated as "strong desire, passion, or lust".) By NT times, the word had come to be used almost exclusively for anger. ***Thumos* refers to a rapid swelling of agitated inner feelings of rage, which quickly blaze up, are explosive and powerful in their expression, and then quickly subside.** The problem with this kind of anger is the unpredictable, explosive force with which it can come. It can quickly burn out of control, and be "out of perspective" and "inappropriate to the situation" because of the extreme force which often is behind it. The word itself is descriptive of one's inner emotional experience, while the focus of the word, *orgē*, is more descriptive of the intent or desire to act to resolve the situation. *Thumos* is more an impulsive reaction, while *orgē* is more a settled condition of the mind.

(3.) ***Aganaktēsis*** originally referred to having physical pain or irritation. By NT times, however, it had come to mean **the experience of emotional pain, irritation, hurt, or grief over an action or situation judged to be wrong, unfair or inappropriate resulting in annoyance, displeasure, anger and indignation.** Note that, while *orgē* is a mental bent to act, and *thumos* is an explosive reaction, *aganaktēsis* is descriptive only of one's inner experience of irritation or displeasure. **The word itself communicates nothing about response.** The noun occurs once, in II Cor. 7:11, while the verbal form, *aganakteō*, occurs 7 times - Matt. 20:24; 21:15; 26:8; Mk. 10:14,41; 14:4; Lk. 13:14. Mark 10:14 and II Corinthians 7:11 give us clear examples where **this type of anger can motivate positive action.** This is the proper response to the inner pain or irritation. In one scenario (Matt.20:24; Mk. 10:41), the irritation was held inside. Jesus saw it, however, and chose to address the issue. In most of the other examples, the indignation did motivate some expression to confront, question or challenge the action that caused the irritation, although the emotion was misguided by a poor understanding. In fact, **in those cases where others were irritated with Him, Jesus also spoke up to clarify or correct their perception. Their irritation became an opportunity or occasion for Him to speak to the matter.**

## Anger As A Tool For Growth

In our context of Ephesians 4:26, **the choice of the word *orgizomai* indicates an intent to act to resolve whatever problem has caused an offense.** The form of the word here is in the middle voice, which means the subject does the action, but it in some way affects or limits him. This is often understood as acting "to or for oneself". In other words, it is not just some outward act. The act of getting angry in this fashion profoundly involves the person. He or she voluntarily acts in a way that limits, influences, affects or benefits him or herself. That makes sense. Note, too, that **this is a verb, a chosen action, not just a feeling.** The feeling comes up in response to the offense, and then you choose to embrace or respond to the feeling. In other words, **you do not just let the offense go by, you get involved.** You get out of your comfort zone to speak what is on your heart. **You take a risk to act, to make right what you see is wrong,** ...to put up a boundary where someone has hurt you, or someone else. You resolve an inner conflict by bringing it up with another person to work it out. You will be affected by that process. You put yourself at risk, you do what may be difficult, but you also benefit from "getting it out on the table".

**It is important to see that Paul did not use *thumoō*. He did not advocate that we explode at each other, or that we erupt like a volcano on each other.** That kind of explosive rage is not profitable to create reconciliation. **The *orgē*, however, is meant to be our ally in promoting healthy relationships, and emotional and spiritual maturity.** It provides a signal to us that something is wrong. We have been offended or outraged at something that we felt was wrong. It is not only OK to feel those feelings, we are *commanded* to feel them and move on them, in some way. The emotion of this kind of anger is meant to propel us into action. Now, we still have a mind and a will, here. We still have to evaluate and decide *how* to respond appropriately to the situation. **We are responsible to express ourselves respectfully and lovingly, for growth and edification.**

**The point of Paul's command, however, is: Do something about it! Do not "stuff" what you are feeling.** Resolve it. It could be that you will be the one to benefit by bringing it up, or, it could be an issue that someone else needs your perspective on. It may be something that the Holy Spirit wants to communicate His heart to the Body, etc. Nothing beneficial will happen, however, if you do not move to resolve the inner feelings of anger you feel. The next phrase, "do not let the sun go down on your wrath", uses a different word for anger, one which literally means, "the thing that provoked the anger". Do not let the sun go down on the provoking offense. **Deal with it. It is for the good of all, and it keeps the devil from finding a foothold in you, or in the relationships of the Body.**