



Anger

CULTIVATING HEALTHY ANGER

GARY J. OLIVER

(Psalm 19:14)

Some call it: "blowing your stack," "letting off steam," "letting someone have it," "being totally ticked." Anger is often described with these negative phrases. But is all anger bad? Is it always a sin to be angry? Many Christians go through life stymied in their effort to grow and live effectively, because of their failure to acknowledge, accept, and understand the God-given emotion of anger. They are unaware of its dynamics and potential benefits.

ANGER IS A FACT OF LIFE

What is anger? While "rage," "fury," "wrath," "resentment," and "hostility" are often used to describe the emotion, anger is simply a strong feeling of irritation or displeasure. Actually, anger is experienced much more frequently than most people would like to admit. When people begrudge or disdain others, when they are annoyed, repulsed, irritated, frustrated, offended, or cross, they are probably experiencing some form of anger. Studies show that most people experience this emotion at least eight to ten times a day.

Depression, anxiety, fear, and grief drain the human body of emotional and physical energy. Anger, on the other hand, releases energy into the nervous system and makes a person ready for action. It is a personal choice whether to use that burst of energy in constructive or abusive ways.

HEALTHY VS. UNHEALTHY ANGER

When people allow anger to control them, it becomes unhealthy anger. Unhealthy anger expresses itself in a desire for revenge and can easily distort one's perspective, block the ability to love, and limit one's capacity to think clearly. At that point, people are more likely to spend their anger energy in destructive actions such as emotional, verbal, or physical abuse and violence.

The opposite of that unhealthy anger is healthy anger, which could also be called "quality anger." The Bible says, "Be angry, and do not sin" (Eph. 4:26). This type of anger depends on the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Healthy anger allows people to invest their emotional energy in confronting evil, righting wrongs, and changing things for the good. The energy of anger, when wisely invested, can provide greater focus and intensity and can lead to greater productivity. Martin Luther said: "When I am angry, I can write, pray, and preach well, for then my whole temperament is quickened, my understanding is sharpened, and all mundane vexations and temptations are gone."

AN ANGER MANAGEMENT PLAN

In order to confront and control unhealthy anger, a person must decide a plan of counterattack in advance. When unhealthy anger is not under control, it blocks the ability to think clearly and be objective. However, taking the time to think and pray through the following issues prepares people for an objective, reasoned investment of their anger energy, so they can respond with healthy anger.

Step 1—Be Aware of Anger

One of the many myths regarding anger is that a person with an anger problem shows it through his or her appearance and ac-

tions. However, a battle may rage inside a seemingly calm demeanor. People need to identify what makes them vulnerable to anger, how their body responds to anger, and what physical manifestations of anger they adopt when enraged.

Step 2—Accept Responsibility for Anger

Many people blame others for their problems. When God confronted Eve in the garden, she blamed the serpent for her mistake. When God confronted Adam, he first blamed Eve and, eventually, blamed God. It is easy for an angry person to say, "So and so made me angry." Other people may speak or act to cause hurt or frustration, but blaming a personal reaction on someone else is not accurate. People don't "lose" their temper. They "choose" their own temper.

Step 3—Identify the Source of Anger

Anger is a secondary emotion that is experienced in response to a primary emotion such as hurt, frustration, or fear. People who are hurt feel vulnerable to more hurt. This is especially true of very sensitive people. For many, anger is a defense mechanism against being hurt.

Frustration occurs when expectations are not met or people cannot meet their personal goals. The things that frustrate people the most usually have one characteristic in common—they really aren't very important. Identifying frustrating personalities or situations will prepare a person for handling similar encounters in the future.

Step 4—Choose How to Invest Anger Energy

This is a critical step. While we cannot always control when we will experience anger, we can choose how we will express it. With God's help, we can find creative and constructive ways to deal with anger. We can allow anger to dominate us, or we can harness anger's energy into healthy

and quality responses. Quality anger involves open, honest, and direct communication. It involves speaking the truth in love. It involves declaring truth and righting wrongs. It involves being open to an apology or explanation and seeks to work toward an agreement.

For many Christians, both the experience and expression of anger have become a habit. Habits can take some time to change. The good news is that with God's help, we can change and grow. As we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us and we apply promises from God's Word, we can replace the old, unhealthy ways of responding with new, healthy and God-honoring emotional responses. As we learn creative ways to invest the God-given anger energy, and as we approach anger from a biblical perspective, we will find one of the most powerful sources of personal motivation available.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of anger include:

- > Psalm 37:8
- > Proverbs 14:16; 15:1, 18; 16:32; 19:19; 22:24; 29:11
- > Ecclesiastes 7:9
- > Mark 3:5
- > Ephesians 4:26-32
- > Colossians 3:8, 21

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on anger at Ephesians 4:26, 27 on page 1554. See also the personality profile of Cain on page 11.

their mind, ¹⁸having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; ¹⁹who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

²⁰But you have not so learned Christ, ²¹if in-

deed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²²that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

KEY PASSAGE



Change/
Maturity

A REAL PUT-ON

(4:22-24)

The Christian life is a process of change and growth toward maturity. God does not make us perfect the moment we accept Christ as Savior. Instead, He transforms our old selves. The "old man," the sin nature, is taken off like a dirty piece of clothing. In its place, we "put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." We wear that new man like a clean piece of clothing in all areas of our lives. At times, we may forget about the new clothing and allow sin to get us dirty; but we can go back to God for cleansing. At other times, that new clothing reminds us of our new identity in Christ and helps us make right choices.

We should be maturing in our Christian lives, finding that the new clothing is comfortable and that wearing it is second nature. We must never stop seeking to become more mature in Christ. That process lasts a lifetime.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about change/maturity on pages 1526, 1527. See also the personality profile of Paul on page 1432.

KEY PASSAGE



Anger

BEFORE THE SUN SETS

(4:26, 27)

The Bible doesn't say, "Never get angry." It does say, however, "Be angry, and do not sin." Anger is a God-given, powerful emotion. Handled well, anger can cause positive change. Anger handled poorly, however, can cause great harm.

So what should believers do with their angry feelings? They should not indulge that anger, because that could cause them to speak or act in ways that they would later regret. Nor should anger be stuffed deep inside with people pretending they never feel angry. That can cause a host of personal and relational problems. Stuffed anger will eventually cause a "system overload" whereby years of resentment erupt when a small spark sets it ablaze. The healthy way to handle anger is to deal with it as quickly as possible—before the sun goes down—so that we do not nurse the anger and thus "give place to the devil." Satan loves to use angry feelings to divide believers. We should seek to resolve our differences with others quickly. Then we can get on with the Lord's work.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about anger on pages 692, 693. See also the personality profile of Cain on page 11

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ground from which he was taken. ²⁴So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

CAIN MURDERS ABEL

4 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." ²Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. ⁴Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their

fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, ⁵but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

⁶So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door.

Sin lies at the door.
And its desire is for you,
but you should rule over it.

GENESIS 4:7

And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

⁸Now Cain talked with Abel his brother;^a and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up

against Abel his brother and killed him.

4:8 ^aSamaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate add "Let us go out to the field."

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Anger

ANGRY AS CAIN?

(GENESIS 4)

Cain had a problem with anger. It wasn't that he got angry. God didn't warn him because he got angry; God warned him because he *stayed* angry.

The incident that provoked Cain's anger occurred during a worship service. The brothers met to offer sacrifices to God. Cain brought an assortment of farm goods as an offering; Abel presented an offering of special value. Cain did his duty; Abel gave his best. God was pleased with Abel's offering, but rejected Cain's. The older brother was furious.

Cain's original anger actually represented a positive response. But the anger missed its target. Cain should have been furious with himself. Instead, Cain's anger became a deadly weapon looking for a new target. At that point, God intervened. He corrected Cain's misplaced anger and offered him another opportunity: "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Gen. 4:7).

Adam's firstborn opened the door for sin. Cain got angry at God and took it out on his younger brother Abel. Anger became murderous jealousy. Soon, Abel lay dead in a field. Killing his brother did little for Cain's anger. When God approached him, Cain denied knowing or caring where his brother might be. He resented the consequences of his sin. Cain displayed no remorse or repentance. He became stuck in his anger.

As Cain demonstrates, anger must be ruled or it will rule. Uncontrolled anger quickly becomes a destructive tyrant. When we invite God to help us identify the causes of our anger and take corrective measures, anger can become a servant rather than a master in our lives. God's Word gives powerful counsel when it notes, "Be angry, and do not sin" (Eph. 4:26).

To Learn More: Turn to the article about anger on pages 692, 693. See also the key passage note at Ephesians 4:26, 27 on page 1554.

¹⁸And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

THE GOLD CALF

32 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

²And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me." ³So all the people broke off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* to Aaron. ⁴And he received *the gold* from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf.

Then they said, "This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

⁵So when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD." ⁶Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

⁷And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted *themselves*. ⁸They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!' " ⁹And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it *is* a stiff-necked people! ¹⁰Now therefore, let Me

alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

¹¹Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹²Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. ¹³Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.' " ¹⁴So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

¹⁵And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony *were* in his hand. The tablets *were* written on both sides; on the one *side* and on the other they were written. ¹⁶Now the tablets *were* the work of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God engraved on the tablets.

¹⁷And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp."

¹⁸But he said:

"It is not the noise of the shout of victory,
Nor the noise of the cry of defeat,
But the sound of singing I hear."

¹⁹So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf *and* the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tab-

32:13 ^aGenesis 13:15 and 22:17



Hot Anger (32:19) The Israelites had thrown off all restraint and were reveling in the vilest sin while Moses was talking with God on the mountain. When Moses heard and saw what they had done, he smashed the tablets of the Ten Commandments, burned the golden calf, ground it to powder, and made the people consume it. Jesus also showed anger when He cleansed the temple (John 2:13-17). Some evil situations justify righteous, "hot anger" as a wake-up call for sinners. **Topic: Anger**

who burns it shall wash his clothes in water, bathe in water, and shall be unclean until evening. ⁹Then a man *who is* clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and store *them* outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification;^a it is for purifying from sin. ¹⁰And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until evening. It shall be a statute forever to the children of Israel and to the stranger who dwells among them.

¹¹He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. ¹²He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; *then* he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean. ¹³Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD. That person shall be cut off from Israel. He shall be unclean, because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; his uncleanness *is* still on him.

¹⁴This is the law when a man dies in a tent: All who come into the tent and all who *are* in the tent shall be unclean seven days; ¹⁵and every open vessel, which has no cover fastened on it, *is* unclean. ¹⁶Whoever in the open field touches one who is slain by a sword or who has died, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

¹⁷And for an unclean *person* they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for purification from sin, and running water shall be put on them in a vessel. ¹⁸A clean person shall take hyssop and dip *it* in the water, sprinkle *it* on the tent, on all the vessels, on the persons who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, the slain, the dead, or a grave. ¹⁹The clean *person* shall sprinkle the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; and on the

seventh day he shall purify himself, wash his clothes, and bathe in water; and at evening he shall be clean.

²⁰**But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD.** The water of purification has not been sprinkled on him; he *is* unclean. ²¹It shall be a perpetual statute for them. He who sprinkles the water of purification shall wash his clothes; and he who touches the water of purification shall be unclean until evening. ²²Whatever the unclean *person* touches shall be unclean; and the person who touches *it* shall be unclean until evening."

MOSES' ERROR AT KADESH

20 Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.

²Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. ³And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: "If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! ⁴Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? ⁵And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink." ⁶So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them.

⁷Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

19:9 ^aLiterally *impurity*

SOUL NOTE



Can't Take It Back (20:7-13) It was too late—Moses couldn't take it back. He had exploded in anger, so God punished him. Anger can be the most damaging of all emotions, causing people to say or do things they regret. Out-of-control anger can ruin friendships and marriages and even cause nations to go to war. Some people end up living forever with the consequences of choices made in a moment of heated anger. People who struggle with destructive anger must find help to discover alternative ways to manage it. This begins by turning it over to God. **Topic: Anger**

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Judah. ¹⁷Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon. ¹⁸Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me.

¹⁹Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, "The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. ²⁰Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

²¹So we labored in the work, and half of the men^a held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared. ²²At the same time I also said to the people, "Let each man and his servant stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard by night and a working party by day." ²³So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes, except that everyone took them off for washing.

NEHEMIAH DEALS WITH OPPRESSION

5 And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. ²For there were those who said, "We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain, that we may eat and live."

³There were also some who said, "We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine."

⁴There were also those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our lands and vineyards. ⁵Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of

our daughters have been brought into slavery. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards."

⁶And I became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. ⁷After serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them, "Each of you is exacting usury from his brother." So I called a great assembly against them. ⁸And I said to them, "According to our ability we have redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations. Now indeed, will you even sell your brethren? Or should they be sold to us?"

Then they were silenced and found nothing to say. ⁹Then I said, "What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies? ¹⁰I also, with my brethren and my servants, am lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop this usury! ¹¹Restore now to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also a hundredth of the money and the grain, the new wine and the oil, that you have charged them."

¹²So they said, "We will restore it, and will require nothing from them; we will do as you say."

Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them that they would do according to this promise. ¹³Then I shook out the fold of my garment^a and said, "So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be shaken out and emptied."

And all the assembly said, "Amen!" and praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise.

4:21 ^aLiterally them 5:13 ^aLiterally my lap



SOUL NOTE

A Positive Solution (5:6) Nehemiah's anger was righteous indignation. Many of the Jews were suffering—not at the hands of enemies, but at the hands of their rich countrymen who had lent them money. When a payment was missed, the lender would seize the debtor's land. Nehemiah was determined not to allow this to continue. He put his anger to work by calling a meeting of the moneylenders and condemning their methods. They then agreed to return the seized lands (5:12). When you feel anger burning beneath the surface, ask God to guide you toward a productive way to resolve the conflict. **Topic: Anger**

- 15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child;
The rod of correction will drive it far from him.
- 16 He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches,
And he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty.
- 17 Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise,
And apply your heart to my knowledge;
- 18 For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you;
- 19 Let them all be fixed upon your lips,
So that your trust may be in the LORD;
I have instructed you today, even you.
- 20 Have I not written to you excellent things
Of counsels and knowledge,
That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth,
That you may answer words of truth
To those who send to you?
- 22 Do not rob the poor because he is poor,
Nor oppress the afflicted at the gate;
- 23 For the LORD will plead their cause,
And plunder the soul of those who plunder them.

SAYINGS OF THE WISE



Child Discipline

KEY PASSAGE

SPARE AND SPOIL

(22:15)

The Bible emphasizes the importance of parental instruction and correction in raising children. God has given parents the responsibility to train their children in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6). Parents must deal with misbehavior by using corrective discipline. The "rod of correction" has gotten bad press because of the problem of child abuse. Good parents, however, understand the need for the "rod of correction," such as a spanking, but not in anger and never abusive. This "rod," used sparingly for only blatant misbehavior (and not childish irresponsibility), is guaranteed to drive foolishness from the heart of a child. "Do not withhold correction from a child," continued Solomon, for it will "deliver his soul from hell" (Prov. 23:13, 14). Parents show great love for their children when they lovingly and consistently discipline them. When parents train their children in the way they should go, the parents have sown seeds of hope that when their children are old they "will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

To Learn More: Turn to the article about child discipline on pages 830, 831. See also the personality profile of the wise son on page 802.



SOUL NOTE

Ready to Explode (22:24, 25) Anger can be a dangerous emotion if it energizes destructive behavior. This proverb encourages people to "make no friendship with an angry man." People may not be able to avoid the anger expressed by others, but they can avoid close ties with "furious" people. Such people are ready to explode, and those around them will either catch the brunt of that fury or become guilty by association. The advice to stay away from people who cannot control their anger should be taken seriously. People must choose carefully those who will be their closest friends, spouses, and business partners. **Topic: Anger**

²² "Let all their wickedness come before You,
And do to them as You have done to me
For all my transgressions;
For my sighs *are* many,
And my heart is faint."

GOD'S ANGER WITH JERUSALEM

2 How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion

With a cloud in His anger!
He cast down from heaven to the earth
The beauty of Israel.
And did not remember His footstool
In the day of His anger.

The Lord has swallowed up and has not
pitied
All the dwelling places of Jacob.
He has thrown down in His wrath
The strongholds of the daughter of
Judah;
He has brought *them* down to the
ground;
He has profaned the kingdom and its
princes.

³ He has cut off in fierce anger
Every horn of Israel;
He has drawn back His right hand
From before the enemy.
He has blazed against Jacob like a
flaming fire
Devouring all around.

⁴ Standing like an enemy, He has bent His
bow;
With His right hand, like an adversary,
He has slain all *who were* pleasing to His
eye;
On the tent of the daughter of Zion,
He has poured out His fury like fire.

⁵ The Lord was like an enemy.
He has swallowed up Israel,
He has swallowed up all her palaces;
He has destroyed her strongholds,
And has increased mourning and
lamentation
In the daughter of Judah.

⁶ He has done violence to His tabernacle,
As if it were a garden;
He has destroyed His place of assembly;
The LORD has caused
The appointed feasts and Sabbaths to be
forgotten in Zion.
In His burning indignation He has
spurned the king and the priest.

The Lord has spurned His altar,
He has abandoned His sanctuary;
He has given up the walls of her palaces
Into the hand of the enemy.
They have made a noise in the house of
the LORD
As on the day of a set feast.

⁸ The LORD has purposed to destroy
The wall of the daughter of Zion.
He has stretched out a line;
He has not withdrawn His hand from
destroying;
Therefore He has caused the rampart
and wall to lament;
They languished together.

⁹ Her gates have sunk into the ground;
He has destroyed and broken her bars.
Her king and her princes *are* among the
nations;
The Law is no *more*,
And her prophets find no vision from
the LORD.

SOUL NOTE



A Perfect Anger (2:1) Jerusalem was Israel's capital city. Israel was God's chosen nation. But when the people of Jerusalem turned their backs on God to pursue idols, their favored status did nothing to protect them from being punished. They had to endure God's anger, just like anyone who disobeys His commands. Unlike human anger, which is often the product of insecurity or a deficient temperament, God's anger flows from His perfect justice and holiness. But after this judgment occurred, Jeremiah wrote, "The Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion" (3:31, 32). **Topic: Anger**

city, a three-day journey^a in extent. ⁴And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVE

⁵So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. ⁶Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes. ⁷And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,

Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. ⁸But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

JONAH'S ANGER AND GOD'S KINDNESS

4 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. ²So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. ³Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for *it* is better for me to die than to live!"

⁴Then the LORD said, "*Is it* right for you to be angry?"

⁵So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. ⁶And the LORD God prepared a plant^a and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

¹⁰Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented

3:3 ^aExact meaning unknown 4:6 ^aHebrew *kikayon*, exact identity unknown

SOUL NOTE



Traumatic Change (3:1-3) Trauma changes people. Jonah had nearly died in the ocean—he couldn't help but be changed. While in the belly of a huge fish, Jonah recognized the hand of God in his circumstances. And when all hope was lost, God was there (2:7). When Jonah found himself alive on a beach, he praised God who had given him another chance. This time when God called, Jonah obeyed. Trauma changes us—whether the change is good or bad often depends on how we respond. God uses our troubles as tools to shape our souls. **Topic: Trauma**

SOUL NOTE



Pouting Prophet (4:9) When Jonah learned that God would spare the Ninevites, he became angry. Perhaps he was concerned that his reputation was at stake if his prediction of the city's destruction didn't come true. Perhaps he wanted a front-row seat for Nineveh's destruction—after all, Assyria was Israel's enemy. Instead of rejoicing in the repentance of wicked people, Jonah became angry. His anger at Nineveh's sinfulness was correct; his selfish anger at God's mercy on them was wrong. When we feel angry, we must honestly consider why we are angry. Anger for God's causes can be helpful; selfish anger is not. **Topic: Anger**