

# Controlling Our Anger

Responding Constructively to the Curveballs of Life



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## Is Anger a Good Thing?

**A**nger is the most insidious of the seven capital sins, in part because many Fathers of the Church and great theologians and moralists have mistakenly taught that anger is justified if its target is sin and evil.

Modernity builds upon this ambiguity and considers anger as potentially a good thing:

*“Anger can be a good thing. It can give you a way to express negative feelings, for example, or motivate you to find solutions to problems.*

*But excessive anger can cause problems. Increased blood pressure and other physical changes associated with anger make it difficult to think straight and harm your physical and mental health.”*

Adapted from the *Encyclopedia of Psychology*

But anger is **NEVER** a good thing. Evil can **NEVER** be a good thing, under any circumstance. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord establishes

a direct link between **murder** and **anger**. He says:

*“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with your brother you will be liable to judgment.”* (Matthew 5.21-22)

## Origin of Anger - Something Perceived as Wrongful

“**K**indle”, “burn”, “hot”, are words usually used to describe anger when things take a turn not to our liking. One of the oldest texts to describe anger and the devastation it brings, shattering human dignity, is recorded in Genesis 27:

*Esau said to his father, “Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.” And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. Then Isaac his father answered him: “Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of heaven on high. By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; but when you break loose you shall break his yoke from your neck.”* (Vv 38-40)

*Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him,*

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*and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; **then I will kill my brother Jacob.**" But the words of Esau, her older son, were told to Rebecca; so she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Behold, **your brother Esau comforts himself by planning to kill you.** (Vv 41-42)*

Let's consider verses 38-40, quoted above: Esau is very emotional and upset against a blatant injustice; Isaac has only one blessing, and he gave that to Jacob, who earned that blessing through devious subterfuge, assisted by the unexplainable partiality of Rebecca, the mother of the twins.

Every action impairs the validity of Isaac's blessing, yet Isaac tells Esau that he cannot do anything about it: he has one and only one blessing.

Esau bitterly complains against such injustice. "He lifted up his voice and wept," says the text. Isaac relents and answers Esau by giving him the desert as land and making his sword the source of his livelihood, yet he must serve his brother, a couple of minutes younger than him; and concludes with a Delphic pronouncement that when Esau "will break loose," he shall break his brother's yoke from his neck.

In his anger, Esau misconstrues his father's words as an invitation to kill the brother: by his sword he will serve justice and break from his neck the yoke of his brother. He comforts himself with the decision of killing his brother Jacob.

## Result of Anger - Total Lack of Understanding

**A**nger is more than an emotional state, as psychologists define it, varying between mild irritation and full-fledged fury and rage. In his anger, Esau did not understand the words of Isaac, his father.

Intellectual blindness, the lack of understanding, is the most visible result of anger; consequently, it is most destructive, because anger deprives us of Reason, the peculiar faculty that identifies us as humans, makes us intelligent beings.

In anger we become less compassionate, less sympathetic, less sensitive, less considerate, less tender, less kind, less thoughtful, less tolerant, less patient, less forbearing, less lenient, less merciful, less forgiving, less approachable, less supportive, less reassuring, less tactful, less perceptive, less prudent, less of any other concept that may be a segment of the totality of meaning of an “understanding person.” We become emptied of our very human nature!

This is the reason why psychologists focus on preventing the onslaught of anger, which they call “anger management.” The techniques of anger management are focused not just on expressing one’s feelings in assertive, non-aggressive ways, but also by converting or redirecting them into more constructive behavior. Finally, psychologists encourage controlling the internal physiological responses aroused by anger—low-

ering the heart rate, calming the self down, letting the feelings caused by the adrenaline rush subside.

If none of these Heimlich maneuvers succeed in bringing Reason back so that it can breathe, then modern science is resigned to the fact that somebody will get hurt... This is the best psychological science can offer us.

## Bringing Reason Back to Life

**W**e need to bring Reason back to life, not just make it breathe again.

Saint Paul the Apostle writes to the Romans about how *“all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”* (8.28) This is a very high level statement that needs to be unpacked and specified so as to understand it in detail.

### Step One: All Things Work Together

The important starting point is the key concept of “all things work together,” a verbose English translation of a two-word Greek original (*panta synergei*). There must be a unifying principle for things to work together, and that unifying principle is God’s purpose calling us, which marks us as “those who love Him.”

So, what is God’s purpose towards which He calls us?

## Step Two: God's Purpose, Our Sanctification

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul states, *"this is the will of God, your sanctification."* (4.3) But how can one achieve sanctification?

Those who love God achieve sanctification when they set their minds not on things of the flesh, but when they live according to the spirit and set their minds on things of the spirit, the spirit of Christ. (Romans 8.5)

Indeed, the Apostle explains further in his first letter to the Corinthians that even if all things are lawful for the Christian, not all things are beneficial. **The Christian must not be dominated by anything; even by his freedom:** *"Food is meant for the stomach, and the stomach for food, and God will destroy both one and the other."* (6.12-13)

Thank God for destroying food AND stomach!

## Step Three: The Redemptive Power of Death

Thank God for Death! Thank God for re-focusing our full and undivided attention on Him and Him alone.

It is unsurprising that the fallen human intellect, bent on the self with narcissistic focus, interpreted God returning us to the dust from which he had created us as a punishment and not as a second creation, a sublime redemption.

We needed the encounter with Jesus of Nazareth to understand the true meaning of our redemption, of returning to the dust. An encoun-

ter that heals us, because it cures our blindness, restores Reason, the power to seek the truth, therefore of perceiving the cause, the significance of things, in sum, of understanding.

## Understanding Our Nature

**M**anaging our anger and healing us from anger are two different things. Managing anger is dealing with a series of particular instances of anger bouts; while healing anger consists in getting rid of its causes. We need to understand our nature and temperament in order to create a prescribed course of treatment, a way of life to heal our anger and pride.

### **Inherited Temperament**

It is good to learn how to manage our anger, as long as this helps us focus better on identifying the causes of our emotional swings between irritation and fury.

We have inherited our temperament, our nature affecting our behavior, with no say into its composition and correct mixture: it may be a fair hand dealt, or it may be not so fair.

The groundwork of coming to terms with our temperament is the domain of education and instruction: it starts from the moment of our conception and birth, and should be successfully brought about at a reasonably acceptable level

by age 18.

This education will continue until our death.

### **Values Upholding the Goals**

A reasonably acceptable level of understanding our nature is supported by cultural as well as religious and spiritual values. In our multiethnic and multicultural society it is a challenge to assess the true worth of the cultural and religious values we are asked to assimilate and live by.

The values proclaimed and proposed by our Lord Jesus Christ in his Gospel often clash with those advanced by the kingdom of man: *“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household”* (Matthew 10.34-36).

We find the fruit of the tree in man’s garden of flesh more beautiful and appealing. But the reality is that of what Paul the Apostle describes in his letter to the Galatians (5.19-21):

*Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, **outbursts of fury**, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like.*

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In the Kingdom of God, the fruits of His garden are nourished by the Holy Spirit. The human virtues, even though fruits of human reason, the image of God (Genesis 1.27), only prepare us to receive the analogous Gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11.2), with the help of which we are perfected as images of God and find our genuine identity.

## We Are Called to Perfection

**T**he origin of anger is a response to what we perceive as an injustice, a wrong. To heal ourselves from the scourge of responding through anger—whether it is a low intensity annoyance or a full-fledged fury—to injustice and depravity, we must recover and reclaim justice and morality to our own nature.

But how can this be done? First, we must put ourselves in the presence of our Father in heaven, and secondly we must become sanctified, healing the sin and injustice at our anger's root.

### **Putting Ourselves in the Presence of the Father**

There is nothing more powerful than putting ourselves in front of God, standing face to face with the Father, in the image of Whom we possess our existence and self; this judgment, this ultimate act of worship ennobles us, elevates us

to the graceful degree of activating our capacity to act in His image.

The triggers which bring to fruition the Father's image are given to us in our baptism: faith, hope, and love. The presence of the Father activates this yeast of the heavenly kingdom to inform and guide all our actions, feelings, thoughts, and decisions, and brings out, reveals through our face, His image and countenance, our true identity, and shines it upon all around us.

### **Healing Evil in and Around Us**

Jesus commands us to forgive "*not seven times (...) but, I tell you, seventy times seven!*" (Mt 18, 21-22) — that is ALWAYS, and he does not mean for us to disregard, ignore or forget sins and injustice against us; he does not mean for us to manage our anger. He means very much more; he means to heal our anger at its very source, that is to expiate and to remit, in the image of our Father, all sin and injustice committed against us.

This is easier said than done! But Saint Paul the Apostle shows us the entrance of this narrow way. Having been baptized in the incarnation of God's Word, we are united with our Lord Jesus (Romans 6.3). Our self, our "I", shares the power of the Self, of the "I" of the Lord Jesus, and, through His sacrifice we turn our cheek receiving sin and injustice to the other cheek, our true one—the one in the most beautiful image of the heavenly Father—and we reveal it to and we shine it upon anyone and anything wronging us.

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## From Natural Life to Spiritual Life

**T**he Christian journeys along the road of practicing self-discipline not just to be a nice person, but out of love for God, because in our inner self we take delight in the law of God: *“For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self”* (Romans 7.22). That law of God which is perfect and revives the soul; decrees that are sure, making wise the meek; precepts that are right, rejoicing the heart; commandments that are clear, enlightening the eyes (Psalm 19.7-8).

Our pursuit of perfection is relentless because our Father is the living God; it is extreme because we are the living image of our living God; it is constant because our living God is perennial.

The journey to our perfection starts in our body and ends in our spirit: *“It is sown corruptible; it is raised incorruptible. It is sown dishonorable; it is raised glorious. It is sown weak; it is raised powerful.”* (1 Corinthians 15. 42-43)

### From Vice to Virtue

We have a faint idea about what it means to be good, because we know all too well what evil is; we know more or less what it means to be moderate, because we know very well when we are targets of excess; we know more or less what it means to be just, because we know very well when and how to be partial and bigoted.

But this is not enough to be conversant with

virtue. Virtue is more than an intellectual understanding or emotional feeling. Virtue comes with active practice of the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, and the array of ancillary virtues built upon these four cornerstone foundations.

All philosophers—the word means “people in love with wisdom”—whether in antiquity or modern times have elaborated and calibrated the scale of values governing society based on the virtues, and every time society wandered away from this lighthouse they were promptly wrecked into totalitarian terror.

Significantly, these lovers of wisdom all have classified **anger** as a **shortcoming** of the cardinal virtue of **temperance**.

In Christian understanding, temperance can be understood 1) as **the general condition** that accompanies all moral virtues imposing the moderation of reason to all human actions and passions (in this word’s broad sense), and 2) as **one of the four cardinal virtues** that **moderates** human inclination towards the sensible pleasures, especially the sense of touch and taste (appetite).

Now, this information is very helpful to us in developing our plan of intervention in the healing process of anger: we must start working on ourselves in seemingly a totally unrelated field. Yet **fasting and mortification of the flesh** (abstinence, sobriety, chastity, continence) is the most direct way of mental and physical training

in healing us from anger.

This exercise is the negative half of our work; for it to be effective, we need to positively practice the virtue of meekness to heal anger directly; and to reinforce meekness, we need to practice honesty, modesty, humility, clemency, and learning.

### **From Virtue to the Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

Healing anger cannot be achieved without the Holy Spirit's peculiar gift of fear of the Lord.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit bring to perfection all the human virtues that have been elevated in the Christian to moral virtues through the sanctifying action of faith, hope, and love received in the sacrament of Baptism.

Through the gifts, the Holy Spirit takes us over, as promised by the Lord, to comfort and guide us: *"The Consoler, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you."* (John 14.26)

The Prophet Isaiah announces the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit that will rest on the new shoot growing from the roots of Jesse, ancestor of the Messiah:

*"The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and piety. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord."* (Isaiah 11.2-3)

The gift of the fear of the Lord brings to perfection the virtue of hope, through which we have the confidence and certainty to obtain eternal life with the help of God: nothing can prevent or impede the Christian from obtaining eternal life, its ultimate supernatural goal, with the help of God.

The fear of God keeps us focused on this goal, above and beyond the trials and difficulties of this world; it perfects our Hope, which in its turn encourages us to take on any hardship associated with acquiring all the virtues, particularly those dependent on temperance, as listed above.

The pursuit of our eternal happiness is a far more unalienable right than the one proclaimed by the unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united states of America, because it is guaranteed by the unfailing help of the Holy Spirit, and in contrast to the human failure so much feared in the very first lines of the otherwise grandiose Declaration, can never become destructive of our eternal end, as Paul the Apostle states in the majestic opening of his letter to the Ephesians:

*“In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were*

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*marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit, who is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory." (1.11-14)*

## Prayer and Spiritual Diary

**H**ealing our anger—as well as monitoring our progress on the way to perfection—requires detailed and serious work.

First and foremost, we must understand that this work cannot succeed without the help and support received from God, that is his grace: thus we must set a regular schedule for prayer and meditation concentrating on self-examination and producing our detailed psychological profile in a written format. This will help us in planning the work necessary in attaining Christian perfection to the best of our abilities.

Each prayer session must follow the same format, minimizing distractions:

- Make the sign of the cross and recite the opening prayer "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."
- Keep a moment of reverent silence and put yourself in the presence of the heavenly Father.
- Then read slowly and aloud the subject

of the chosen meditation.

- Examine yourself and think about the possible applications of what you just read to your own life, developing an appropriate questionnaire.
- Based on the answers to the questionnaire, decide on the practical resolutions and set the schedule of their implementation.
- Write down the resolutions and the implementation schedule in your spiritual diary for follow-up in the next sessions.
- Do not overload yourself with too many things to do; one step at a time is the best practice.

Keeping an accurate and factual spiritual diary is very important; it serves to record our progress and keeps ourselves focused on our goal.

If you are working with a psychologist or spiritual director to start preparing yourself for the spiritual sequence of healing your anger, incorporate your sessions and advice/guidance received, as well as how much of the advice/guidance you accepted and acted upon, into your prayer/spiritual diary.

Let us look at an example of how we might do this.

### **Reading: Saint Augustine's Letter 38**

*To his brother Profuturus, Augustine sends greeting.*

*As for my spirit, I am well, through the Lord's*

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*good pleasure, and the strength which He condescends to impart; but as for my body, I am confined to bed. I can neither walk, nor stand, nor sit, because of the pain and swelling of a boil or tumor. But even in such a case, since this is the will of the Lord, what else can I say than that I am well? For if we do not wish that which He is pleased to do, we ought rather to take blame to ourselves than to think that He could err in anything which He either does or suffers to be done. All this you know well; but what shall I more willingly say to you than the things which I say to myself, seeing that you are to me a second self? I commend therefore both my days and my nights to your pious intercessions. Pray for me, that I may not waste my days through want of self-control, and that I may bear my nights with patience: pray that, though I walk in the midst of the shadow of death, the Lord may so be with me that I shall fear no evil.*

*You have heard, doubtless, of the death of the aged Megalium, for it is now twenty-four days since he put off this mortal body. I wish to know, if possible, whether you have seen, as you proposed, his successor in the primacy. We are not delivered from offenses, but it is equally true that we are not deprived of our refuge; our griefs do not cease, but our consolations are equally abiding. And well do you know, my excellent brother, how, in the midst of such offenses, we must watch lest hatred of any one gain a hold upon the heart, and so not only hinder us from praying*

*to God with the door of our chamber closed, but also shut the door against God Himself; for hatred of another insidiously creeps upon us, while no one who is angry considers his anger to be unjust. For anger habitually cherished against any one becomes hatred, since the sweetness which is mingled with what appears to be righteous anger makes us detain it longer than we ought in the vessel, until the whole is soured, and the vessel itself is spoiled. Wherefore it is much better for us to forbear from anger, even when one has given us just occasion for it, than, beginning with what seems just anger against any one, to fall, through this occult tendency of passion, into hating him. We are wont to say that, in entertaining strangers, it is much better to bear the inconvenience of receiving a bad man than to run the risk of having a good man shut out, through our caution lest any bad man be admitted; but in the passions of the soul the opposite rule holds true. For it is incomparably more for our soul's welfare to shut the recesses of the heart against anger, even when it knocks with a just claim for admission, than to admit that which it will be most difficult to expel, and which will rapidly grow from a mere sapling to a strong tree. Anger dares to increase with boldness more suddenly than men suppose, for it does not blush in the dark, when the sun has gone down upon it.<sup>1</sup>*

## **Meditation**

The following observation of St. Augustine

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strikes me: anger is the way to hatred, particularly when I am very sure my anger is righteous, and hate not only hinders me from praying the way our Lord instructed, by entering in our chamber and closing the door shut, but it shuts the door against God, drives Him out from my own fleshy human unspiritual Paradise! There is a certain sweetness in righteous anger, because we think we are actually doing the work of God: we are bringing justice around us.

This connection between anger and hatred troubles me; it looks like a deep root system feeding from the depths of evil, that dark terroir that hides from and refuses to receive the nutrients of the Holy Spirit hovering above it, thus incapable of producing healthy vineyards. Maybe this is the meaning of shutting our hearts closed to God, blocking him out of my existence, not allowing the Heavenly Vinedresser to care for me. How, then, can one characterize anger with the adjective “just?” The road runs from anger to hatred to murder, I suspect, a road paved with “just claims.” Brings to my mind the image of wolves with lambskins (Matthew 7.15), against which our Lord cautioned us to be watchful, “*wise as serpents and innocent as doves*” (Matthew 10.16).

## **Examination**

“How are you?” is often the greeting I hear, particularly when a little bit of time has passed since my last meeting with close friends. I answer with

a polite “Not bad,” words that many times leave a subtle unpleasant feeling in my heart, because the truth is that I wished things were a LOT better; not physically, as I enjoy good health, but spiritually, mentally. I am presumptuous; true, I do not openly think that God is erring, but in hiding I am questioning him, I am not seeking his will, and am thus “wasting my days through want of self-control.”

How can I mount a good guard against the sudden eruption of anger in my heart? I need to learn more about its mechanism and rise, whether my physiology and temperament are prone to it: brooding on events and persons I perceive to be against me. Also, the fact that I am reluctant to say sorry: it takes me forever to make that move, allowing too many suns to set on my anger.

### **Practical Resolution**

I need to prepare a list of studies and articles/books to read and educate myself on anger management.

As I am aging, my will power does not enjoy the full support of my physical fitness and I need to develop compensatory skills; I need to learn about this with the help of good counseling. How can I find one? Need to look into this.

When is my next physical? Check with the physician and integrate the results with this practical resolution.

My prayer has to change: I talk too much to

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God and listen too little and only to the things I like to hear.

Be more resolute and prompt in apologizing. Should not let time pass; the longer I wait, the harder it becomes to say sorry.

### Implementation Schedule

*Immediate:* start apologizing promptly if you wronged someone; or when someone thought you wronged them! Make a habit of formulating and expressing your views in a clear and constructive way (be careful not to be condescending!)

*Next two weeks:* 1) Doctor's appointment; 2) Start compiling the reading list; 3) Look for a good counselor, depending on the physical exam results.

*Next month:* change my prayer from talking to listening.

Follow up on my progress during my daily examination of conscience at prayer time.

## Blessed Are The Meek

**T**he Lord is never angry—**precisely because** he acts in justice.

The Sacred Scriptures are a monumental record of human misunderstanding of God's

nature and the tender love that the Heavenly Father has shown to make us understand His true self: creating us in His own image; and though we rejected Him, He continued to have faith in us and expected His vines to bring fruit (Isaiah 5.1-5)<sup>2</sup>; he took care of his vineyard through His Law and Prophets, and at the end of times, He sent his own Son (see Matthew 23.34-36). At every step, though, we translated His Word to our language, a language steeped in our fallen nature, and continued kicking against the goads (Acts 9.5).

The Sacred Scriptures are replete with anthropomorphic descriptions of God and his nature, and this is an almost insurmountable challenge: we use concepts and understandings calibrated on our fallen nature, not calibrated on divine Grace and thus have great difficulty in getting to know God.

Abingdon's Strong's Exhaustive Concordance on the Bible lists nine Hebrew and two Greek words translated into English with the word **anger** about 235 times. The following passage from Deuteronomy 31.17 summarizes the understanding conveyed by these passages: *"Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?'"* Indeed, Judges 2.20 plainly states this state

of mind: *“Then the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and He said, “Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice.”*

The prophet Isaiah has a forceful, almost extreme, description of the Lord’s anger: *“I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes.”* (63.3) The prophet, whose name meant “The Lord Saves”—in Hebrew “ye-sha’yah(u)—received the sanctifying Word of God through the live coal taken from the altar of the Lord being placed on his lips (6.6-7) proclaiming: *“Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand.”* (6.9) Instead of understanding this message in the sense of becoming alert and paying real attention to the Word of God, we translated it and understood it in the dis-graced sense of the human word: we listened and did not comprehend, we kept looking, but we did not understand.

That’s the reason we fail to recognize the message that the Father’s kingdom has arrived, although the Lord proclaimed it. We still want to see Him as someone commanding stones to become loaves of bread; we insist He throw himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple; we advise Him with Peter *“God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you,”* (Matthew 16.22) you should worship Satan on the high mountain to

possess all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor (Matthew 4.3-10). As if He did not have them in his hands (Psalm 24). We keep missing Him in the stranger, the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the prisoner (Matthew 25.34-46). We think we can find Him chasing mirages and scrutinizing portends, but do not see Him hanging naked on His Cross; we shake in disbelief our heads and ask him for one last miracle, to come down from His throne (Matthew 27.39-40).

This foggy contrast of anthropomorphic expressions surfaces even in the most sublime moments of clairvoyance and contemplation in God's true nature. Through the prophet Hosea, God says: *"I will not execute my fierce anger (...) for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst."* (11.9) The prophet Micah knew there was something else behind what he perceived as anger in God: *"Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy."* (7.18)

The prophet Jeremiah was puzzled how to express the Lord's message of mercy and punishment: *"The anger of the Lord will not turn back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly."* (Jeremiah 23.20) He knew that the anger humans ascribed to God was a shameless attempt of provocation: *"Do they provoke me to anger?" says the Lord. 'Do*

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*they not provoke themselves, to the shame of their faces?”* (Jeremiah 7.19)

In Exodus, after Israel worshiped the calf, the Lord told Moses: *“I will make my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name YHWH.”* (33.19) Indeed, God commanded Moses to go up the mountain and there *“YHWH descended in the cloud and stood with him (Moses) there, and proclaimed the name YHWH. YHWH passed before him, and proclaimed, ‘YHWH, YHWH, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.’”* (34.5-6)

Far too many commentators have missed this nuance. The strictures of human language and anthropomorphic imagery we must use to express our concepts about God has been a stumbling block in understanding his lordship and majesty. A more prudent and chaste use of our expressions could have spared us so many misrepresentations.

Our Lord’s message could not have been clearer. Echoing Psalm 37.11 *“But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace,”* he formulated his beatitudes, the Law of his New Covenant, in his Sermon on the Mount: *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”* (Matthew 5.5)

In only two instances Jesus expressly sets himself as a model to emulate, and both are for meekness and humility: *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in*

*heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.”* (Matthew 11.29) The second one is after he had washed the feet of his disciples at the start of the Last Supper. He asks them if they realized what he had done for them, if they understood the lesson of humility he gave them and concluded: *“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.”* (John 13.14)

Meekness and humility heal anger and conceit. Saint Gregory the Illuminator in his collection of Reiterative Sermons has the following praise of meekness:

“Meekness is a sweet and delectable taste for the palate and calms down rioting crowds fallen prey to arrogant pride. (...)

Meekness is the root upholding humility and patience and temperance, uniting to Christ. Meekness is the driving force of all the virtues and of all the goodness that are seen among us. (...)

Meekness is a clear spring and a cloud bearing sweet dew to quench the thirst of those who are parched. Meekness is a tutor of youth, adherence to instruction, and teacher of order.

Meekness is alertness in the righteous and proclaims their witness, who understood the earthly to be ephemeral and grabbed the eternal life with determined hearts and alert body, freed from everything pernicious in

body and mind.

Meekness is the prized wealth of the poor, because earthly riches fade and are lost in pride, while the poor gain with meekness non-perishable riches which moth and rust cannot destroy.<sup>3</sup> (See Matthew 6.19)

## Reason - the Peculiar Faculty Wherein Resides Faith

**T**he true meaning of “understand” is to apprehend the truth; truth is the foundation of sense and meaning.

To “reason” is to advance from one thing understood to another. Thus, the nature of reason consists in seeking the truth.

Endowed with reason and free will, man by his very nature has for object the First Truth—God.

We discussed above (“Result of Anger—Total Lack of Understanding”) how anger and rage blinds our reason and blocks understanding.

It should be clear, therefore, that once deprived of reason, we are incapable of Faith, and Faith by its very definition means obtaining God, the ultimate Truth. Thus, anger blocks our communion with God.

This is one more motive to heal our anger and pride with meekness and humility.

## Summary

**A**nger is never a good thing, because it is one of the **capital** sins: 'capital' means it generates many other sins.

Injustice and being wronged are the root cause of physiological changes in our body that generate an emotional response ranging between irritation and fury.

We must start by learning how to control these bouts through anger management techniques.

But we can heal ourselves from anger in all its expressions only by addressing the root causes bringing it about: remitting and expiating all injustice and wrong by uniting us with our Lord Jesus through His call to perfection.

The healing process is an elevation from our natural life to our spiritual life received through baptism.

Our model is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ who invited us to be like him, meek and humble.

We must establish and follow a regular prayer/meditation schedule and keep a spiritual diary recording our progress. By healing us from anger, we become truly faithful because we can seek without obstruction the ultimate Truth, God.

## Asking the Heavenly Father to Give Us the Humility of His Crucified Son

**A prayer from the *Zhamagirk* (Prayer book)**

### Opening Prayer

Blessed is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

### Psalm

Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you;  
save your servant who trusts in you.

You are my God; be gracious to me, for to you, O Lord, do I cry all day long.

Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you,  
O Lord, I lift up my soul.

For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.

Give ear, O Lord to my prayer; listen to my cry of supplication.

In the day of my trouble I call on you, for you will answer me.

There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.

All the nations you have made shall come and bow down before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.

For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.

Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.

For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

Glory be to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Now and forever, and unto the ages. Amen.

## **Intercession**

Glory to you, O God, glory to you! O Lord, glory to you for everything!

## **Proclamation**

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Let us pray to the Lord for peace! May he accept us, give us life, and have mercy on us!

Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!

## Prayer

Listen to our hymns, Lord our God, accept our entreaties, the lifting of our hands and our prayers! Sanctify our fragrant evening offering prepared to please you! Abound in us, O almighty Lord, faith, hope, love, and all deeds of virtue, so that always devoutly trained in your benevolent will day and night, we may be deserving of the salvation of our souls and ask, O Lord, your life of spirit, and receive from you grace and mercy, to glorify in thanksgiving you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Peace unto all!

Bowing down prostrate before your presence, O Lord our God, we thank you for having granted us to pass this whole day in peace. Give us, O Lord, we pray to pass this evening and night ahead of us without sin and scandal by staying steadfast in faith, hope, love, and obedience to your commands. We ask for peace for the whole world, for steadfast strength for your holy Church, and for salvation of our souls. And we shall raise majestic lauds of glory into the heights of your almighty

dominion, O Christ our Lord, now and forever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

### **Proclamation**

Let us pray the Lord to grant peace to the whole world and strength to the holy Church, and say together:

### **Intercession**

Lord have mercy! Lord have mercy! Lord have mercy!

### **Prayer**

Merciful and provident Father, creator of all that exists, accept the entreaties of your servants in this evening prayer; you are generous to all with your bountiful gifts. Have mercy, O Lord, towards the whole world and your holy Church, towards those who are sick, those who suffer, the wayfarer and the seafarer, the penitent and the confessor, and the souls of those who have passed away; because you, almighty Lord, know our needs and wants more than we may ever recognize or understand. Glory, power, and honor to you together with the Son and your most Holy Spirit, now and forever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

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## REFERENCES

1. Translated by J.G. Cunningham, Logos Virtual Library: <https://www.logoslibrary.org/augustine/letters/038.html>
2. *“Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.”*  
Also see Matthew 21.33-41.
3. *Yachakhapatum charḳ’* (Venice: St Lazarus Press, 1838), 108-109.
4. *Encyclopedia of Psychology*  
<https://www.apa.org/topics/anger>

**Cover Image:** [www.peopleofar.com](http://www.peopleofar.com)

### For further reading:

<https://www.apa.org/topics/anger/control>

<https://www.apa.org/topics/anger/strategies-controlling>

<https://www.apa.org/topics/anger/understanding>

## Notes





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