

SABBATH THOUGHT 2025-01-18—ANGER PROFANES THE COVENANT

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

When I began writing the weekly Sabbath Thought articles, I prefaced my first by saying, "*I thought I would try something. The idea stemmed from my wife to write down a few thoughts once in awhile. No agenda. No preaching. Just my thoughts.*" Those who publicly expose their thoughts will always have critics but they absolutely must learn peace when confronted by angry or vitriolic comments. Thankfully, most readers are kind and encouraging.

Public speaking or writing to the narrow audience of Christians is quite different from other audiences in my experience. The latter have never shown a lack of respect or inappropriate social etiquette. In contrast, I have received a few angry comments from those claiming to be Christians. Unlike a respectful audience, they:

- Are quick to anger.
- Vigorously dispute small matters.
- Deny being obviously angry and claim I have misconstrued their response; therefore, I wrongly accuse them.
- Accuse others of not comprehending God's Word but refuse to explain or 'teach' the correct understanding.
- Call it God's judgment when calamity comes upon sinners.

While population distributions will always include people of this ilk, why does it occur among Christians of the *ekklesia*? Even on the rare occasion when I encountered an opponent when speaking to a large audience for work, there was a degree of respect that kept discussions respectable and useful.

Aside from personality, I think there are two primary causal factors for anger within the *ekklesia*. First, it has been legitimized in many sermons. Ironically, my first Sabbath Thought was titled "Church Organizations," which discussed the divisions among brethren that are both self-imposed and encouraged by organizations. Many SAY that God's children are in other organizations but that is *not* what they believe because their next sentence is usually "but they are not ...," and you can fill in the blank. This adversarial view has been taught within the *ekklesia* for decades and it only promotes a disdainful view of others who do not agree or associate with a particular person or group. There is no way to rationalize this 'doctrine'.

The second factor is the anonymity of communications. Unlike speaking to a live audience, most exchanges today are faceless. Those who send angry comments likely would not say some of the hurtful things if they witnessed the impact on someone. While modern communications are not a cause per se, they allow unrestrained behaviors because there is no peer pressure or fear of rebuke.

But anger is nothing new. Even some of the disciples were easily angered and quick to condemn. When they related the disaster that befell the Galileans, it was apparently in the context of receiving punishment for their sins:

LUKE 13:1-5 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answered and said to them, "**Do you suppose that these Galileans [*'brethren'*] were worse sinners than all other Galileans**"

['brethren'], because they suffered such things? 3 “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. 4 **“Or those eighteen ['brethren'] on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men ['brethren'] who dwelt in Jerusalem?”** 5 “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Someone made a mistake or, perhaps, even committed a sin; therefore, every bad thing that happens to sinners is God's vengeance. Even if that were the case, no Christian should ever rejoice when someone suffers because, if for no other reason, God may turn against such a heartless person:

PROVERBS 24:16-18 For **a righteous man may fall seven times** and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by *evil*. 17 **Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles;** 18 Lest the LORD see *it*, and it displease Him, and **He turn away His wrath from him [unto you].**

If you think about it, the Bible is a record of the failures of mankind, even those faithful to God. None was perfect including the standard-bearers of righteousness—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Peter, Paul, etc. They fell short of perfection at times and anyone in these modern times who thinks they are worthy of mention for their righteousness should remember most of us were called BECAUSE we were foolish, weak, base, or despised (or a combination):

1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-28 For you see **your calling**, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. 27 But **God has chosen the foolish things** of the world to put to shame the wise, and **God has chosen the weak things of the world** to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and **the base things of the world** and **the things which are despised** God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

Jesus Christ called James and John the “sons of thunder”¹ and with good reason. Remember when James and John wanted to call fire down from heaven after Jesus was rejected by a village of Samaritans?² But the Holy Spirit changed them. John became the apostle of agape love and James seemed to reflect upon his own previous “thunderous” ways to emphasize peace instead of conflict:

JAMES 3:2, 5-6, 8, 17-18 For **we all stumble in many matters**. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the entire body. ... 5 So too the tongue is a little member, yet boasts greatly. See how a little fire kindles a great forest! 6 And the tongue is a fire, the world of unrighteousness. Among our members the tongue is set, the one defiling the entire body, and setting on fire the course of life, and it is set on fire by hell. ... 8 But no man is able to tame the tongue. It is unruly, evil, filled with deadly poison. ... 17 But the wisdom from above is first **clean, then peaceable, gentle, ready to obey, filled with compassion and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.** 18 **And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**

James said, “**we ALL stumble in MANY matters**” and I can imagine he included himself as he recalled his old “thunderous” ways. Paul, too, changed. Before his conversion, he literally

¹ Mark 3:17.

² Luke 9:52-56.

murdered those he saw as a threat to the worship of God. With the power of the Holy Spirit, he turned his anger into zeal above all others in service to God³. The difference between those who received praise from God in the Bible and some in the *ekklesia* today is that the former put aside their anger and replaced it with agape love when they received the Holy Spirit.

Offenses are the result of anger much, if not most, of the time. While thinking about this, it occurred to me that reconciled offenses, usually with a simple and sincere apology, are barely a memory. On the other hand, I can vividly recall unreconciled offenses. Perhaps memories of reconciled offenses are like sins that God forgives and subsequently forgets “as far as east is from the west.”⁴ Reconciliation allows us to put away offenses—at least the emotions of it.

When someone sends the occasional angry comment, there are often unrealistic expectations behind them. It could be an expectation that the author is the fullness of godly wisdom and knowledge. Who on earth can uphold such a claim? The Bible can never be fully understood in this lifetime so there is always much to learn. Angry comments sometimes assume that an author demands others to defer to their opinions. Opinions are always personal and expectations should allow someone to have them and others to agree or disagree. Humans learn and teach through discussions, not rebukes. Lastly, there is the impossibly high standard of perfection where one mistake—real or perceived—results in rejection.

Some must think they are called to right every wrong and judge every word and action. News flash—no one today has been given that position and authority. The pinnacle role of apostle, prophet, and miracle worker has not been given to anyone these days. While that is a sad state of affairs, perhaps it is partly due to a lack of humility, meekness, and agape love required to simply BE children of God.

For whatever reason, I have always used writing to capture my thoughts. My Sabbath Thought articles are so named for that reason. But let me be clear: angry comments do not upset me. They are at times hurtful but not in the way you might think. To me, they are an indication of a heart and mind that are shortsighted and lacking. God is creating a Kingdom in which no one will ever be angry. He does not want to *destroy* sinners, He wants them to CHANGE and be a part of it. No matter what punishments are coming from God, Scripture records His desire is that sinners repent and “turn” back to Him! God has wanted to be a Father to mankind from the beginning with the Old Covenant. Whether the Old or New Covenant, those who would be His children are too often angry and fight among themselves:

MALACHI 2:10 *Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning [defiling, staining, polluting] the covenant of the fathers?*

Notice that this is from the book of MALACHI, not one of the New Testament writers. Malachi wrote this to the tribe of Judah, the wife of God in the Old Covenant, but it applies to an even greater extent to the *ekklesia* of the New Covenant because He has given them His Holy Spirit! Anger profanes the Covenant!

Those who so easily and quickly turn to anger are also lacking mercy and compassion. These are part of the “**weightier matters of the law**”⁵ that are required and expected in *this* life, NOT

³ Gal. 1:14.

⁴ Ps. 103:12; Isa. 38:17.

⁵ Matt. 23:23.

THE NEXT! (What need will there be for “justice, mercy, and faith” in the Kingdom of perfect agape love?) Anger, hatred, malice, etc. only grieve the Holy Spirit of those who hold on to those feelings:

EPHESIANS 4:29-32 **Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth**, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 **Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.** 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Christians driven by anger cause too many unnecessary offenses. Regardless of who gets angry—the offender or the victim of the offense—it only causes hurt. How do I know? Because I, along with everyone else, have been angry both as an offender and a victim. We are to put aside anger and become perfect in agape love. It is a hard task and requires much time and effort. Failure to do so raises the question of “Having begun in the Spirit, **are you now being made perfect by the flesh?**” (Gal. 3:3). The answer, though, is “do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**” (Rom. 12:2).

Anger is an age-old problem for mankind, including those called to become God’s children. No one is called because their past works were glorious and exemplary. Quite the opposite:

2 TIMOTHY 1:9 [God] who has saved us and **called us with a holy calling, not according to our [past] works**, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

Everyone knows the fruits of God’s Spirit but how many understand those fruits are manifested in our behaviors and works TOWARD OTHERS? Having the Holy Spirit means CRUCIFYING the passions and desires of the flesh:

GALATIANS 5:22-24 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those *who are* Christ’s have **crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

The conclusion of the matter is simple. It always has been. Although it is a hard work, we are called to become perfect⁶:

COLOSSIANS 3:12-14 Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 **bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.** 14 But above all these things put on **love, which is the bond of perfection.**

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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⁶ Matt. 5:48.