

Changed into His likeness - Slow to Anger

This evening I want to look at the third of the five facets of God's nature that The Lord proclaimed to Moses on Mount Horeb.

When we first believe in Jesus, or receive Him as Lord & Saviour, we are born again from above. The new life within has to be fed in the same way that a new born baby is fed. The idea is that the characteristics of the new life, in the Image of God, gradually becomes stronger and the characteristics of the old sin nature becomes weaker. Also known as the flesh.

1 Peter 2v1-3

Ephesians 4v13 & 15

I have proposed that The Lord's intention is to restore His image to man. And that Image is rooted in this passage in Exodus 34v5-7. The transformation is something that is produced by God's grace through regular practice by us. Paul in 2 Corinthians speaks of beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus. Jesus speaks of "abiding in my word" in John's gospel. There are many similar passages, but all of them clearly encourage us to put regular effort into being changed.

The Hebrew words used are "ark-aphim", literally slow of-angers. The AV uses "longsuffering".

Similar to patience and [forbearance](#), longsuffering is the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation. A person who is longsuffering is not quick to retaliate or promptly punish someone who has insulted, offended or harmed him. The opposite of [anger](#), it is intimately associated with mercy. Longsuffering is an attribute of God and thus a fruit of His [Holy Spirit](#).

Various translations use "longsuffering," "patience" or "forbearance" to translate the Greek word *makrothumia*. This word combines the roots *makro*, meaning "long," and *thumos*, meaning "temper," so it literally means "to be long-tempered." It implies the opposite of "short temper," describing the mind holding back a long time before it expresses itself in action or passion. *Makrothumia* is rarely rendered as "patience" and never as "forbearance" in the New Testament, although both words are considered synonyms of "longsuffering."

The heroes of today's culture, portrayed in the media as angry, aggressive defenders of democracy, destroy without [patience](#) or forethought all opposing forces regardless of their personal qualities. In our impatient, self-centered world, one quality of character has all but perished: longsuffering. Books, films, TV - anger is normal

The general view of anger is:-

Anger is a normal emotion to be managed or to be channelled into positive results. If you feel angry it must be expressed - not suppressed or repressed.

Better to explode than to smoulder. The air is cleared - you know where you stand - you can learn to agree to disagree.

But although it may help to resolve inner feelings, anger expressed can cause serious damage to relationships - or to the person on the receiving end.

Intimidation; I'm right & your wrong; bullying.

The question is, 'Does the New Testament encourage expressions of anger or does it encourage "slow to anger"?'

James 1v19-20

Ephesians 4v21-32 & 5v1-2 - context - "OK so you're angry, don't sin". Or compare with John 2v1. Let all . . . be put away i.e. let the Holy Spirit.

John 2v12-17 - Zeal

Matthew 5v21-22

Luke 9v51-56

The church through the centuries frequently decided to be angry with "righteous indignation", to be a channel for God's wrath - instead of being a channel for grace.

Examples are the inquisition, attacks on abortion clinics & staff, anti-Semitism, sectarian fighting in Northern Ireland.

Hebrews 12v14-15

Colossians 3v8-10

Galatians 5v16-26

Romans 13v14 - make no provision for the flesh.

The change from "angry" to "slow to anger" should happen by "face to face dealings with God, prayer & bible study. But sometimes we need something extra - eg the raising of Lazarus & the removal of the grave clothes.

Sometimes we need physical healing - medical or miraculous.

Sometimes we need emotional healing to deal with emotional hurts.

Sometimes we need deliverance from spirits.

Sometimes we need to deliberately forgive someone.