

The Professor's Theological Home Page

"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." (Acts 16:31)

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Why do we get angry? – Part 2

By Mario Velez

Welcome back to examine the second part of our article dealing with the subject of anger. Again, our article comes from a story of a Houston mother who got angry at her daughter for not reading words out of a book correctly. In frustration, the mother put an iron to the daughter's face and burned her.

In part 1 of our article we saw how anger is an emotional sin. We also saw the different ways it manifests itself in our lives. Yet, if this type of emotional anger is a sin, is it in the same class as the anger or wrath that the Bible links with the Lord? Obviously not since God does not sin. What then is the difference between sinful emotional anger and the anger of the Lord?

We will begin with the premise that God is infinite. We, on the other hand, are finite beings. Therefore, accommodations are in place to allow our limited minds to understand the infinite deity that God is. To do this the Bible at times ascribes to God human characteristics which God does not actually have and which are not a divine attribute. Take for instance, the characteristics of love and hate. When the Bible speaks about God loving and hating somebody, it is not referring these characteristics as attributes. Instead, such characteristics are what are known as anthropopathisms.

The Bible uses anthropopathisms to reveal and explain God's policy and attitude in humanistic terms that we can all understand from our own finite frame of reference. An anthropopathism would include such human characteristics as love, hate, anger, wrath etc. There will be either non-sinful anthropopathisms, such as love, compassion, or longsuffering and sinful anthropopathisms such as hatred, anger, vengeance, jealousy and such.

To interpret correctly the Word of God, we must understand the difference between love, as a divine attribute, and love as an anthropopathism. Love as a divine attribute is part of God's infinite being for all eternity past and future. God's attribute of love has always existed as a complete and perfect attribute for all eternity. Being perfect, God's love attribute means that he does not fall in love. Neither is God's love sustained by emotion, nor did it require an object to love. Thus, his love has been in existence in its completeness even before he created us.

Human love, on the other hand, requires an object to love. Emotions are also part of human love. Yet, God has given us emotions to appreciate certain things in life, but emotions in themselves are not love. Unfortunately, when our emotions are driven by our sin nature they reflect such sinful attitudes as hate, bitterness, malice, gossiping, judging and maligning.

We should never associate God's anthropopathism of hate with any of these negative emotional sins. God does not sin; thus, he does not hate at all. Although hatred is a sin, when the Bible

ascribes to God hatred as an anthropopathism, it is only to express divine disapproval of an unbeliever in terms that we can understand.

Take for instance the anthropopathisms that the Bible uses when it states that God loves Jacob, but hates Esau (Rom. 9:13).

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. (KJV Rom. 9:13)

The anthropopathisms in this verse of love and hate teaches us that God's omniscience (all knowing) knew in eternity passed that Jacob would accept Christ as his savior and Esau would reject Christ as savior. By no means did God interfere with Jacob and Esau's free will to choose for or against Christ. The anthropopathism of love shows that as a result of his faith in Christ as savior, Jacob was acceptable to God. Jacob's adjustment to the justice of God was a result of him accepting Christ. In contrast, the anthropopathism of hate teaches that Esau's rejection of Christ did not allow the proper adjustment to God's justice. Therefore, Esau was not acceptable to God.

It is Christ's sacrificial work on the cross that provides the perfect righteousness that we all need to have a proper adjustment to God's Holiness. God's Holiness, made up of his perfect righteousness and justice demands that we have perfect righteousness to be in union with him for all eternity. God cannot be in union with our imperfect relative righteousness, because to do so would mean he would become imperfect as we are. Thus, God provides a way for us to become as righteous as he is, and that way is through Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the love anthropopathism teaches that God accepts Jacob on the basis that Jacob would accept Christ. The hate anthropopathism, on the other hand, teaches that God rejects Esau on the basis that Esau would reject Christ. One was a believer in Christ and the other was an unbeliever in Christ. This is the basis of God's judgment of salvation to those who accept Christ and judgment of condemnation to those who reject Christ (John 3:16-18).

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (KJV John 3:16-18)

The same principle would apply about other anthropopathisms such as when the Bible speaks about the "wrath" of God (John 3:36).

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (KJV 3:36)

The "wrath" spoken about in this verse is a reference to condemnation to the Lake of Fire of the unbeliever who rejects Christ as savior. Let us be clear, whoever rejects Jesus Christ for their salvation does so willingly. The love of God never rejects any unbeliever. It is the unbeliever

who rejects the love of God because God is longsuffering and does not want anyone to perish (2 Pet. 3:9).

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (KJV 2 Pet. 3:9)

In our next section of this article we will discuss emotions and if there is anger that we can exhibit that would not fall under a class of sin.