**Enemies of the Heart** 􏰀 **Anger**

Anger has made us all do **regrettable** things but before you can understand anger you must understand where it comes from􏰁 your heart.

**All action flows from our hearts.**

Our words and deeds are simply a gauge of what's going on inside. They indicate where we are, where we aren't, and where we're headed.

That embarrassing outburst at your office wasn't an **exception** to what's in your heart. It was a **reflection** of what's really in your heart.

We've all grown very adept at covering for our hearts. In fact, we're so good at it that most of us have no idea just how corrupt we really are. But every once in a while our heart goes public. We swear **we didn't mean it**. But the truth is, **we just didn't mean to say it**.

**Our attempt at monitoring**

Perhaps the major reason we rarely stop to monitor our hearts is that it was never encouraged. As **children**, we were taught instead to **monitor** our behavior.

Eventually your heart - the real you - will outpace your attempts to monitor everything you say and do.

**Proverbs 4:23** *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows*

*from it.*

We tend to reach for remedies to address our symptoms without ever really

dealing with the root problem.

An **unchecked heart has the potential to erode** your relationships, your character, and even your faith. You may be wondering why you don’t seem to sustain a healthy life or relationship. It may be a condition of your heart.

When a person discovers he has heart disease, his overriding concern isn't how he got it, where it came from, or whose fault it is that he has it. His number one concern is, "How do I fix it?"

We should be driven by a similar concern when it comes to the anger that pollutes our heart.

**Understanding Anger**

Of all our emotions, anger is often considered the strongest, rawest, and potentially most destructive.

In 15 different instances, the Bible mentions both the word **anger** and the word **fire** in the same verse. This intentional picture is for good reason.

As we recognize, fire has positive (hot water) and negative (burning house) characteristics. Equally, our anger can reflect God's character (for justice) or it can distance us from him.

**Anger is a secondary emotion**. It always comes from somewhere, but too often we can't see past the smoke and flames - a rude driver, a gossiping "friend," or a procrastinating spouse- to identify the true source. Unless we address our anger at its source it will continue to burn us - and others.

**Anger is really saying,** 􏰃**You owe me.** 􏰃
Anger is a strong emotion of irritation, agitation, or hostility that occurs when a need or expectation is not met.

**Think about a time** when you were really angry. Isn't it true that the entire situation could have been reduced to this simple idea: **You wanted something and didn't get it?** In other words, you didn't get what you were convinced you deserved. Interpreted: Somebody owed you!

Anger says, "You owe me."

Each of us has a vision of the way life **"should be."** In other words, we have expectations of happiness, comfort, success, and security.

**Ephesians 4:26** *"Be angry, and do not sin."*

Anger is not a sin. What we do with our anger determines if it becomes sin.

Anger creeps into our hearts when our expectations are consistently unmet. Then it's easy to find ourselves simmering on a slow burn. **After a while we stop getting angry at particular frustrations and we start being angry as a lifestyle**.

Anger results in a **DEBT-TO-DEBTOR** dynamic that always causes an **imbalance in any relationship**. If you owe someone money, or vice versa, you know this to be the case. No matter what else is going on at the moment, the debt is always in your mind.

There are only 2 ways to resolve this kind of tension: Either somebody has to **pay up**, or somebody has to **cancel the debt**. As long as the debt is unpaid or unforgiven, the debt governs the relationship.

It's easy to believe that the only remedy for our anger is **payback**. After all, isn't that how you settle a debt? What other option is there? And even if there was some other way around the debt, that wouldn't be fair. People ought to pay what they owe. To cancel a debt is to let the guilty party off the hook.

You are probably saying, 􏰃Whoa! You don􏰂t even know me and you want me to consider my anger?􏰄

If I stuck around you long enough to listen, I would likely discover that you have a pretty convincing case as to why you have every right in the world to be mad and stay mad. By the time you finished with your story, I would probably be tempted to join you in your crusade to pay back whoever it was for whatever they did.

But what I want you to consider is that your anger may be **affecting** you more than you realize. And that carrying each of these debts may cause you to be the one who pays.

Here's a question every angry man and woman needs to consider: How long are you going to allow people you don't even like - people who are no longer in your life, maybe even people who aren't even alive anymore - to control your life?

A heart filled with anger is a heart looking to be paid back. Unfortunately, in

most cases, it's our unsuspecting friends and family who are made to pay.

This thinking is tragic because people spend much of their lives waiting for

debts to be paid that cannot be paid.

While it's true that you can't undo what's been done, it's equally true that you

don't have to let the **past** control your **future**.

Remember, your story explains your behavior; it doesn't excuse it.

**To all of this anger the Apostle Paul had some direct things to say**􏰁
• All 􏰀 no amount is necessary or tolerable. (Greek- what all means in?)

Paul that is a pretty unreasonable thing to say.

**32** *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other*􏰄

The sentence structure here implies that forgiveness is the means by which we're to do away with our bitterness, rage, and anger. Forgiveness is what enables us to be kind and compassionate to people who have given us neither kindness nor compassion.

Some of you are saying, 􏰃Well that is nice but that is not going to happen.􏰄 To this point Paul raise the stakes􏰁

The power of this verse is in the 􏰅**just as'. (View of My sin vs. My hurts)** The kind of forgiveness Paul is talking about doesn't make any sense unless

you're a forgiven person. The forgiven forgive.

This understanding isn’t original thought from Paul. The Apostle Paul gleaned it from one his early church colleagues, Peter. I can imagine them speaking about forgiveness over a lunch where Peter shares an experience he had...

Jesus already covered forgiveness (Ch. 6:12) but Peter is looking for a concrete limit or understanding. Peter says 7 because he is trying to anticipate Jesus􏰂 standard of righteousness. Peter is basically asking, 􏰅When is enough, enough?􏰂

Peter, like us, assumed that forgiveness is for the **benefit of the offender.**

**Ephesians 4:31** *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and*

*slander, along with every form of malice.*

*32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other****, just as***

***in Christ God forgave you.***

**Matthew 18:21** *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked,* 􏰂*Lord, how many times*

*shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?*􏰃

*22 Jesus answered,* 􏰂*I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.*• In order to take the emotion out of the listeners Jesus creates a story

that shows forgiveness as debt.

10,000 bags was a hyperbole to show the debt was so high it could never be paid. (Only 600 bags were even collected from all Judea & Samaria.)

* Notice how his debts **affected those closest to him.**

. Our anger causes people around us to be guarded and not to be themselves. (An angry

husband is married to a shell of who his wife is meant to be.)

* If the man had sold his family and possessions it wouldn􏰂t have paid the debt. For most of the offenses we carry, even **if we got our way (revenge), the** 􏰅**amount or act**􏰂 **couldn**􏰂**t/wouldn**􏰂**t pay** what is owed.
* Compassion 􏰀 this word only appears tied to Jesus
* Forgiveness is canceling a debt.

*23* 􏰂*Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle*

*accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed*

*him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able*

*to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he*

*had be sold to repay the debt.*

Few of us want to hurt those around us. But anger places a boundary

between us and the potential of our relationships

*26* 􏰂*At this the servant fell on his knees before him.* 􏰀*Be patient with me,*􏰅 *he*

*begged,* 􏰀*and I will pay back everything.*􏰅 *27 The servant*􏰅*s master took*

*compassion on him, canceled the debt and let him go.*

*28* 􏰂*But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who*

*owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him.*

􏰀*Pay back what you owe me!*􏰅 *he demanded. 29* 􏰂*His fellow servant fell to his*

*knees and begged him,* 􏰀*Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.*􏰅 *30* 􏰂*But he*

*refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he*

*could pay the debt.*

• He was forgiven a 600,000 times greater debt than what the other servant owed him**. (Crowd thought,** 􏰃**How Crazy! Could he not see how much he**􏰂**d been forgiven?**􏰄 **Jesus knew he had them.)**

*31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and*

*went and told their master everything that had happened.*

*32* 􏰂*Then the master called the servant in.* 􏰀*You wicked servant,*􏰅 *he said,* 􏰀*I*

*canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn*􏰅*t you*

*have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?*􏰅 *34 In anger his*

*master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back*

*all he owed.*

* By both debtors being in prison, no debts would ever have been paid. **When we place others in our prison we place ourselves there also** (bitterness & resentment). We make it impossible for anyone to be paid back.
* This prison is torturous. (Heavy, dark, always present.)

Numerous studies confirm **anger and depression** go hand in hand. 􏰃It's like lighting yourself on fire and waiting for the other person to

burn.􏰄
Anger causes me to be: **distracted**, **emotionally consumed**, and to lose **sight of reality**.

Up to this point the crowd was completely with Jesus, but this statement made everyone pause.

The summary of this verse is that **if we continue to wait to be paid back for the wrongs done to us, we will be the ones who pay**. If on the other hand we cancel the debts owed to us, we will be set free.

Holding a debt may possibly be the most destructive thing we can do.

As a believer, I'm called to view forgiveness from the perspective of the cross. Like the servant in Jesus' parable, I've been forgiven of a debt I could never repay - the least I can do is to cancel the debts owed to us by others.

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*35* 􏰂*This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive*

*your brother or sister from your heart.*􏰃

Forgiveness is the gift that ensures my freedom from a prison of bitterness

and resentment.

You don't forgive because the other person **deserves it**; you forgive because

you've been forgiven

**Road to forgiveness:**

The road to forgiveness **leads through our anger, not around it**, as if it had **never existed** in the first place. You can't possibly hope to resolve your anger until you acknowledge it exists.

**Here are a number of helpful thoughts concerning forgiveness:**

1. Forgiving someone is not the same as condoning offensive behavior.

2. Forgiveness is not based on what is fair. It was not fair for Jesus to hang

on the cross, but He did so that we could be forgiven.

3. Forgiveness is not being a weak martyr. It is being strong enough to be

Christ like.

4. Forgiveness is not letting the guilty off the hook. It is moving the guilty from

your hook to God's hook.

**Decide to forgive.**

Forgiveness **runs so contrary to our sense of justice** and fairness that it's unlikely we'll ever feel like forgiving. But in the Scriptures forgiveness is never presented as a feeling; **it's always described as a decision**.

Often people won't forgive because they don't "feel like it." But forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a choice. **Choices lead, feelings follow**.

**Determine to forgive.**Paul wasn't talking about a **one-time transaction**. His present-tense use of the term forgiving indicates a mind-set, an attitude, a **habit**.

Feelings don't automatically follow our decision to forgive.

Healing from unresolved anger **requires genuine determination** on your part alone to cancel the debt owed you.

**Give the gift.**

In Paul's day there were 2 different words in the Greek language used to express the concept of forgiveness. The word Paul chose conveys the idea of **forgiveness as a gift**.

**In the shadow of my hurt**, forgiveness feels like a decision to reward my enemy. **But in the shadow of the cross**, forgiveness is merely a gift from one undeserving soul to another.

Even after this you may say, 􏰃I will never give that person a gift.􏰄 Before you determine that, please consider this􏰁

When God asks you to do something that seems hard it is because those

things require faith. On the other side they make more sense.

**Forgiveness Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank You for caring about how much my heart has been hurt. You know the pain I have felt because of (list every offense). Right now I release all that pain into Your hands. Thank You for Jesus' dying on the cross for me and extending Your forgiveness to me. As an act of my will, I choose to forgive (name). Right now, I move (name) off my emotional hook to Your hook. I refuse all thoughts of revenge. I trust that in Your time and in Your way You will deal with my offender as You see fit. And Lord, thank You for giving me Jesus' power to forgive so that I can be set free. In Jesus' holy name I pray. Amen.