

Characteristics of Righteous Indignation

Anger is not always wrong. Anger that is righteous has certain earmarks, by which it can be distinguished from unholy wrath. Consider the following characteristics, which are evident from the examples cited above.

(1) Godly anger is God-like anger, it is an expression of the anger which has toward the actions of men. Godly people are angry when God is angry. It is anger which is consistent with the holy and righteous character of God.

(2) Godly anger is legal anger. It is wrath based upon men's violation of God's law, and it is anger which is lawfully expressed. The Old Testament Law not only revealed that conduct which was unacceptable to God, making Him angry, but what the consequences of God's anger would be. Godly anger is not vigilante justice, it is legal justice. Those who hate abortion but express their anger in the burning of abortion clinics (and thereby endangering other lives) are not expressing their anger legally.

(3) Godly anger is not explosive, but is only slowly provoked.

Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth ([Exodus 34:6](#)). Repeatedly, God warned sinful Israel through the prophets before pouring out His wrath on them. God's anger does not have a hair trigger.

(4) God does not take pleasure in expressing His anger in the judgment of men.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance ([2 Peter 3:9](#)).

For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazin, He will be stirred up as in the valley of Gebeon; To do His task, His unusual task, And to word His work, His extraordinary work ([Isaiah 28:21](#)).

(5) Godly anger is always under control. Godly anger does not lose its temper. Ungodly anger is excessive and abusive; godly anger never is. Godly anger is always under the control of the one expressing it, rather than anger taking control of them.

But He, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them; And often He restrained His anger, And did not arouse all His wrath ([Psalm 78:38](#)).⁷⁴

“Be Angry, But Do Not Sin” (4:26)