

Anger Issues

Ephesians 4:26-27

Ephesians 4:24-27 (NASB)

...put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one *of you* with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. **26 Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.**

Last week we looked at v25 and we saw that TRUTHFULNESS is a characteristic of everyone who has received the love of God in Jesus and who WALKS IN—ADORNS their new identity in Jesus.

We have been considering a radical truth that the Apostle Paul describes here in Ephesians 4, and defines in 2 Corinthians 5: 17 & 21:

2 Corinthians 5:17&21 (NASB)

Vs 17 ...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

V 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

We are made NEW CREATIONS in Jesus—we have been given a NEW nature.

- We have been separated from who we once were.
- We have been set free from how we once walked/lived and have been given a NEW path.
- We have been given the righteousness of God to walk in.

Paul has been saying PUT THIS NEW IDENTITY ON AND WALK IN IT!

Last week Paul identified the FIRST way that this new identity changes us:

FIRST, Paul explains that we handle the truth differently.

We no longer lie or misrepresent the truth—that was how we USED to live...

- We have NO NEED for lying or misrepresenting the truth!
- We have NO NEED to protect ourself with a lie.
- We have NO NEED to impress others with flattery, slander, hypocrisy or gossip.

WHY? Because the love of God has saved us, forgiven us, and has CHANGED us.

- We NOW speak the truth in love for the benefit of others.

The SECOND way that our new identity in Jesus changes us we see in today's passage:

Not only do we handle TRUTH differently, but we handle EMOTIONS differently.

As we adorn Jesus & identify in Him, we don't just have new actions, we also have NEW EMOTIONS.

- Topping the list for "MOST NEEDED" new emotion is ANGER...
- Anger is swift, brutal, destructive, and often sloppy—harming the angry AND innocent.

“There are two things a person should never be angry at, that what they can help, and that what they cannot”—Plato

“Anger is never without reason, but is seldom with a good one.”—Benjamin Franklin

Today we look at RIGHT anger—AND find hope in our struggles with WRONG anger.

- We have all experienced and come to understand anger’s power and influence.

Many of us know the hurt, divisiveness, joylessness and devastation of anger.

- Either we have a history of mis-handling anger, or we know someone controlled by it.

Today we see hope that the Gospel has REAL power of over anger.

FIRST, Paul draws a distinction between righteous anger and sinful anger.

- And he draws this distinction by quoting King David from psalm 4:4.

“Be angry, and yet do not sin.”—There is a right way to be angry.

1. Righteous anger is always—only directed at sin/evil.

We get this—we hate unfairness and injustice, so THIS makes sense to us...

- **But in an obsession with JUSTICE or FAIRNESS or INEQUALITY we can totally steamroll people who oppose what we think is right.**

2. Righteous anger is CONTROLLED anger.

- It is not only RIGHT...righteous anger is also always RIGHTLY CONTROLLED.
- always treats people with love/is self-controlled

Galatians 5:19-20 (NASB) Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: [...] outbursts of anger...

It’s impossible for us to calibrate an appropriate “*righteous*” anger without knowing what righteous anger even is!

- At what point does righteous anger become sin?
- By who’s standard do we measure “appropriateness?”

Knowing the appropriate standard of measure is important...

I remember reading about the great Swedish warship, “ VASA”—means, “SNARL or HISS”

- Armed with 64 bronze cannons, VASA was considered by some to be the most powerful warship in the world.
- Launched in 1628, crowds in Sweden gathered to watch the christening and launch of this massive vessel—the pride of Sweden!
- Well, they watched in horror as the mighty ship sank less than a mile into her maiden voyage—drowning 30 of her crew.
- The heavy ship was launched and had immediately listed to port and sunk.
- Raised from the bottom in 1961, experts determined it is asymmetrical—thicker on the port side than the starboard side.
- One reason for this is that the **workmen were using different systems of measurement.**

- Archaeologists have found four rulers used by the workmen who built the ship. Two were calibrated in Swedish feet, which had 12 inches, while the other two measured Amsterdam feet, which had 11 inches.
- *Even in 1628 it seems SILLY that there was such confusion over the standard of measure...*

In the US, we STILL use 2 different standards of measurement TO THIS DAY!!

In college I wholeheartedly embraced metric system and came to HATE the imperial units.

- 12 INCHES in a FOOT, 3 FEET in a YARD, 1,760 YARDS in a MILE?? Seriously?
- **THAT'S CONFUSING and IRRATIONAL!!**
- Basically, as our first secretary of state, Thomas Jefferson was charged with deciding which set of measures would be best for our new country.
- He had been instrumental in creating the dollar—the first fully decimal measure any nation ever used.
- BUT Jefferson rejected the metric system, because in origin he found it to be **too French...**

So, we use FEET and INCHES and FRACTIONS of feet & inches rather than logical decimals because Thomas Jefferson thought it was TOO FRENCH!?

- **THAT'S ARBITRARY!**

This is how the world calibrates its morality apart from God—using arbitrary, irrational standards.—“You do you & I’ll do me” is the standard.

- By that standard culture uses a MILLION different systems to measure morality!

This has led to a radical individualism that DIVIDES and SEPARATES people from one another and from God.

- Each one of us gets to decide what is right for ourself...
- We can operate independently and we all work to stay out of each other’s way.
- Individualism always ends up hurting, offending, abusing and even assaulting others in our attempt to remain “independent” and “free”.

Thankfully, God’s standard is NOT confusing NOR is it arbitrary.

- God is GOOD and God is LOVE, and so are his standards!

So what is RIGHTEOUS ANGER?

- God IS love, so His anger—His righteous anger—comes FROM love.
- An anger that comes FROM love... how is THAT possible?

At creation God, in His HOLY, JUST, LOVE, created GOOD things for GOOD purposes.

What angers God is the perversion of His goodness.

- ...when the things He made *right* are turned *wrong*—this is what **SIN** is.

Sin is rebellion against God—when we aim for a goal that is not God’s goals.

- Sin warps and distorts God’s glory.
- Sin tears apart what is good and valuable from God
- Sin perverts and mars what was made pure and beautiful.

Because God is good and love, His nature demands righteous anger over sin and the effects of sin & evil upon His good creation.

- So our righteous anger comes in the face of sin and evil that defiles God’s goodness and tramples on His love.

This anger is not simply an infuriated emotion—it is also a “grieving”

- Just as when Jesus threw over tables in the temple, but was motivated by His deep grief over the sin that demanded that action from Him:

Matthew 23:37 — “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God’s messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn’t let me.

Anger without anguish—anger without tears over the destruction of what God’s goodness...

- **Anger without anguish is evidence of a lack of God’s love in us.**

Righteous anger is birthed and governed by LOVE and is therefore SLOW to be expressed.

- God’s love is evident by His GRACE...
- God’s anger is preceded by His grace.
- In our righteous anger, must exhaust any redemptive, loving avenues of grace.

Because God’s goodness and love are the standard for our righteous anger, we must always desire mercy to triumph over judgment.

James 2:12-13 — So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free. 13 There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.

It’s good to remember Jesus first came carrying a cross before returning with a sword.

- It is good for us to meditate on Jesus and His mercy for us.
- It is good for us to calibrate our anger on Jesus.

We may never be perfect in our righteous anger, but Paul is challenging us to grow in the grace of pursuing it as we pursue Jesus and grow in His image.

Paul says to “Be angry, and yet do not sin.” —So what does WRONG anger look like? Remember the context of Ephesians—We are IN Jesus, and Jesus is IN us:

Ephesians 3:17 — that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love

Righteous anger is motivated by LOVE and often, OUR anger is something entirely different.

3 Signs of Wrong Anger

1. **Wrong anger takes over**
2. **Wrong anger overstays its welcome**
3. **Wrong anger brings unwanted guests**

Bad anger is like Cousin Eddy from Christmas Vacation:

- The obnoxious cousin who shows up uninvited and unannounced at Christmas...
- And we feel obligated to entertain anger at first, but then it takes over, stays too long, and brings company...

1. **Wrong anger takes over**

- Wrong Anger is invasive—it invades with **WRONG** motives
 - Wrong anger is usually marked by pride.
- It is a selfish anger—it flares in response to a **personal offense** rather than an offense against God
- It is directed at **PEOPLE** rather than at sin...

Holding onto anger can give us a feeling of control—even if we can't control a situation or a relationship we can be duped into thinking that our ANGER gives some measure of control...

- We **KNOW** anger makes us miserable... but sometimes we choose this misery because **AT LEAST** we feel like it is predictable and we have a say in it.

Psalm 4: Absalom's wrongdoing tempted David & his people to sin in anger.

- Just **IMAGINE** the stewing and the rehearsing of revenge that must have been going on...
- And then David remembers where **TRUE HOPE** comes from and exhorts His men:

Psalm 4:3-4 (NASB)

You can be sure of this: The Lord set apart the godly for himself. The Lord will answer when I call to him. Don't sin by letting anger control you. Think about it overnight and remain silent.

"Listen, we are separated from our kingdom already, let's not separate ourselves from God too by choosing to anger over God!!"

Wrong anger would have us put our trust in **ANGER** rather than trusting in the Lord...

- Sinful anger directs **PEOPLE** to act in the place of **GOD**.
- If **JESUS** is with us, why on **EARTH** would we want to act on our own apart from Him?
- We were created to trust in the **LORD** to vindicate us—**HE** is our vindication!

How would our relationships—MARRIAGES—change if we trusted the Lord rather than our anger?

James 1:19-20 (NASB)

everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

Wrong Anger puts itself before God and leads us away from growing in Jesus.

- Anger is a handy tool for our enemy—if he can dupe us into anger then he's won!

James 4:7—Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

We must **RESIST** anger—fight it!

- **We must say "NO, not today! You are NOT welcome! Anger, you are not welcome in this relationship, this marriage, this family, this business, this living room..."**
- We must fill our hearts and heads with **TRUTH**—with **JESUS** and press the anger **OUT**.
- Let **JESUS** evict your anger!

John 16:33—"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

2. Wrong anger overstays its welcome

- Wrong anger doesn't just take over, it tries to **MOVE IN**!

Paul warns (in the NLT):

Ephesians 4:26-27 (NLT— And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

We are to serve Anger an EVICTION NOTICE—“before the sun goes down...”

- That means ASAP—don’t even go to sleep—take care of the anger issue! WHY?

Look at **v27—for anger gives a foothold to the devil.**

At Zion NP the canyon walls are STEEP and HIGH—1,300 feet straight up!!

- In the rainy season, the Virgin river floods the canyon & EVERYTHING from wall-to-wall can be swept down the river.
- Mormon settlers tried several times to farm the fertile desert canyon but floods swept them out over and over...
- Archaeologists have found ancient footholds carved into the rock that native peoples used to climb into and out of the canyon during the rainy season—to avoid the danger of a flash flood.
- These footholds are just small little indentations carved into the sandstone that form a polka-dot line ALL THE WAY to the rim of the canyon!!
- these small little indentations are the ONLY FOOTHOLDS NEEDED for the native tribes to successfully farm the canyon.

In the same way Paul warns that our angry heart gives the Devil permission to establish FOOTHOLDS in our hearts.

The Greek word for FOOTHOLD is *topos*: *literally means “geographic location” and metaphorically means, “opportunity for action”*

- **Our anger can create a place for the Devil to be at work within us!**
- These can be small discreet places—like that faint polka-dot line down the canyon wall...

3. Wrong anger brings unwanted guests

Anger never travels alone... it ALWAYS brings guests...

Anger wants to SQUAT on our spiritual, emotional and physical health...

- Rather than RELEASE it we REHERSE it.
- When we REHERSE the wrong done to us in our heart we give it room to stay...
- When Anger is given a place to stay, it: Brings Unwanted Guests...

When we are angry, we are susceptible to invasion from unwanted guests...

Proverbs 25:28—A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.

- When anger is given control of our emotions and is given a place to stay, we become like an ancient city without protective walls—vulnerable to invasion.

Anger’s Unwanted Guests:

- 1. Bitterness takes root in the angry heart.**
- 2. Negativity & Criticism grows from the root of Bitterness.**
- 3. Discouragement follows negativity.**
- 4. Discontentment follows negativity.**
- 5. We become indifferent in our anger.**
- 6. Unlovingness enters making us unloving and feel unloved.**
- 7. Finally Despair settles in.**

Despair is evidence we’ve been led away from our identity in Jesus

Our anger, and our HOLDING ONTO anger sometimes seems to give us a sense of control.

- But anger is more damaging to the angry person than it is to anyone else!

“Anger is an acid that does more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.” — Mark Twain

- *Like that mighty Swedish warship, if we don’t calibrate our anger, it could sink our ship!*

How do we resist anger?? — FORGIVENESS.

- The Gospel is all about forgiveness.

An unmistakable work of the Gospel on our life is that we are now able to FORGIVE as Jesus has forgiven us!

So Paul says to act swiftly, to GET IT OUT — “get rid of it!”, he says.

- HOW do we evict anger?

Ephesians 4:32—Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

- Turn your heart—your eyes—your mind—to Jesus.
- Let HIS kindness, HIS tender-heartedness, HIS forgiveness wash over you.
- Then walk in HIS Kindness, tenderness, forgiveness—LIKE JESUS!!

If you had cancer and were given the opportunity to have it disappear right now you’d do whatever it takes to get rid of it!

Anger is emotional cancer—it grows and controls us and ruins our life and relationships.

The good news today is that Jesus CAN and WILL remove your anger—and the rest of your sin—if you acknowledge it and confess your sin to Him!

TURN from wrong anger and TURN TO Jesus!!

Phillippians 4:8-9

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

— — — — -Exhortation— — — — —

1. Acknowledge that your anger is wrong—it is sin.

- You may have been wronged—victimized even...
- So your anger may seem totally justified!
- But wrong anger is SIN and it separates us from God and gives the Devil a place in our heart to work and UNDERMINE our identity as a Kingdom Kid.

2. If you have wrong anger toward someone—DEAL WITH IT!

- Go call them!
- Turn to your spouse...
- EVICT that foothold that the Devil is squatting on inside of you!