

Who are you when no one is looking?

Sinful Anger and Righteous Anger:

Ephesians 4:25-27 ESV

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

Recap:

We started a new series entitled...*"Who are you when no one is looking"*.

I made the comment that I believe we live in a society that is fixated with external appearances and shallow relationship.

Where the measure of a life is what another thinks about them, not who they truly are.

Paul is here dealing with a group of believers and trying to help them move from a pagan mindset to a Christian worldview.

It might help you to remember the context of this letter:

Ephesus was a large city

Full of people engaged in activities that are contrary to God's law.

A people who have rioted against the church and killed believers.

A place full of religious people, not Godly people.

A place where no one really knew what it was to be a Christian, they had heard of members of a sect who followed a Galilean prophet, but there was nothing as formal as the term *Christian*.

This is not only a letter to the early church, Paul is not only defining this for all time, he is defining this for the first time.

This is not a letter written by a perfect man to a perfect people

This is a letter written by a passionate man to a group of people he loves and is trying to help.

So often we read the Bible like this, as if it was written by perfect men instead of being inspired by a perfect God. What is written is a standard of holiness, not a standard of behavior. These are goals to aim for not sticks to beat yourself with.

Last time we looked at the value that Paul was placing on being authentic in our relationships, with each others, within the body and with others outside of the body.

Please, you can not look at this next verse in isolation, but in context. The context is the need for authentic and valuable relationships.

Introduction:

When I look at how Paul is dealing with these issues, I am struck by the thought that he is probably dealing with them in the order in which he felt that people struggle with them.

The first issue he most often saw in the life of the Christian was lack of authenticity, lack of deep, sincere, non-self serving relationships. The Jewish culture and the pagan culture where driven by façade and pretense. He is saying that there needs to be a change in this area. First of all, in the lives of those that now profess to be Christians.

Second, he now starts to deal with an issue that is common to all men, an issue that violates or can ruin a person's life. An issue that can cause disruption and corruption on levels and destroy relationships, Paul wants to deal with the whole area of anger in a Christian's life.

So let's look at what Paul means when he says:

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil.

There are some people who think that this means we should get rid of anger altogether.

They read this as if it says, *being angry is sinful*.

They will tell you that the best thing to do is to suppress your anger
That a real Christian should never get angry, and to hold it down as
much as you can and if you don't the devil will get hold of your life.

And this group of people would have you believe that all real
Christians never get angry.

That Christians are some sort of emotional dead fish that just smile
benignly at life and watch it go by passionlessly.

I not only **don't** believe that this is what Paul is saying, I also don't
believe that that is a healthy approach to life.

Some reports point towards the fact that repressed and un-dealt with
anger can lead to anything from heart conditions and skin rashes to
depression and suicide.

That is what religious people and ungodly people would have us do,
that is what the world would have us believe.

They would tell us that we should just repress and hold in our anger;
they would have us believe that is what Paul is telling us to do.

Suppression is not the way to deal with anything, and in fact flies in
the face of what he has already suggested to us. Paul said we should
be authentic, that we should not be operating in falsehood; we should
not be lying to each other.

When you suppress something, you are bottling it up and then one
day it just explodes and you end up with a mess on your hands and
destroyed friendships and relationship.

You are lying to yourself and others about how you feel about actions
or inactions.

Be angry and do not sin:

What Paul is saying here is a very positive thing.

He tells us in a very positive manner...*BE ANGRY*.

This is not making a concession to weakness.

He is not saying...*now on occasion you will be angry...just make sure
you don't sin.*

I believe he is saying...

There are times when you must be angry.
There are times when anger is an appropriate response, but you must never be angry in a sinful manner, not in a sinful way, not as a result of a tempter tantrum.

That is a different issue.

That is an issue of the lack of fruit of the spirit and that is not what he is dealing with here.

Now I know that this flies in the face of what we have been taught in church and in our society.

So let's turn to the Word and see what God says on the topic which leads me to my second thought.

So here are some initial thoughts I have on this verse, then I will give you a couple of things to take home and contemplate.

1st thought- There is a right sort of anger:

I believe Paul is saying that there is a right sort of anger.

In fact I would go so far as to say that the capacity we have for anger is put in us by God, it is one of our natural created instincts.

A capacity for anger against what is evil, against what is wrong in the world.

A capacity to be passionately moved to action when someone violates or attacks, that which is important, or that which you love is something that has been given us by God.

The Bible never teaches us to crucify our instincts, it teaches us to tame and control our instincts.

The humanist will tell us that we are all animals and need to give in to our instincts and into our appetites, which is not the Christian way.

The Christian way is to bring them under control, not get rid of them.

The Christian teaching on all issues of passion, instinct and appetite is that they are to be controlled.

Anger is something which is placed in us by God; it is a capacity within man which results in his being roused by the sight of certain things. And the result is that it is a priceless and precious thing.

So we have a God given gift of anger which has been defiled by the fall, we must bring it under our control and not allow it to lead us into sin.

Matthew 5:5 ESV

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

The Word says that the meek will inherit the earth, not the weak.

Weak: feeble, frail, puny, scrawny, not intense, not working to full capacity, lacking strength of character

It is inconceivable that the weak will inherit anything.

Maurice Nicolle, in his book "The Mark, The New Man", believes that the Greek word "praos," inaccurately translated as "meek," originally meant "becoming tamed, as a wild animal is tamed."

I would suggest that a better translation is "*a capacity for going against our fallen resentfulness, rage full tendencies*".

In other words, the person who develops the inner strength to tame or manage their fallen automatic reactions or instincts will be able to become all that they are destined in Christ to become, and will be able to do all that they are called to do.

2nd thought- Anger is a quality God displays:

Lets look at the life of Jesus

Mark 3:5

"And when He had looked around at them (the Pharisees) with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other."

And again in Luke when the Pharisees tried to trick Jesus and he passionately and forcefully with anger responded*You hypocrite!!*
(Luke 13:15)

And then again in Apostle John's accord of the life of Christ

John 2:14, 15

"And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business.

When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables."

He was Jesus displaying righteous anger, righteous indignation at what was going on.

Jesus was not out of control,
He was not raging,
He was displaying anger.

Jesus who was without sin did these things.
Jesus who knew no sin responded in this way.
He was angry and He did not sin, so logically the issue isn't the anger, the issue is the sinning.

The Old Testament:

You read anywhere in the Old Testament and you will find mention of God's anger towards sin, of God's judgment and wrath against those that do not follow His statutes.

Now this wrath of God is not an uncontrollable rage as we sometimes are lead to believe.

No, it is a righteous indignation against that which is wrong.
Against that which breaks His Holy heart.

Psalms 97:10 ESV

"O you who love the LORD, hate evil!"

Hate evil.

Be angry with evil in yourself and evil in the world.
Love God passionately and this passionate love should produce in you anger towards those things that God hates.
If you love God you will hate evil, you will hate sin, you will be angry with yourself and the perpetrators of those that break Gods heart and attack His creation.

John the Baptist preached that people must turn from this wrath of God, this Holy Anger.

Jesus exhorted people to flee from the wrath, the anger of God against sin and run into His loving, waiting and patient arms.

So anger is a quality that God has.

Paul is exhorting us to be like God...To be angry but not to sin, not in a sinful way.

John Gill in his commentary puts it like this:

There is anger which is not sinful; for anger is found in God himself, in Jesus Christ, in the holy angels, and in God's people; and a man may be said to be angry and not sin, when his anger arises from a true zeal for God and religion; when it is kindled not against persons, but sins; when a man is displeased with his own sins, and with the sins of others:

With vice and immorality of every kind; with idolatry and idolatrous worship, and with all false doctrine; and also when it is carried on to answer good ends.

3rd thought- Anger isn't the issue, motive is.

Three Greek words are often translated "anger":
thumos, parorgismos, and orge.

- a) "Thumos" refers to a fury out of control. It sometimes refers to something that went up in smoke.
- b) "Parorgismos" is an internal seething, a fuming resentment that most often arises out of jealousy.

c) "Orge" refers to anger based on a settled conviction. People have certain priorities they're committed to, and when something violates those priorities, they respond. For example, you love your children with all your heart, but if someone hurts them, you will be angry. You can be angry and sin, or be angry and not sin. Your motive is the issue.

OUR WORLD DOESN'T EVEN BLUSH AT ITS OWN SIN

Jeremiah 6:15 ESV

"Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown," says the LORD."

We don't even blush at our own sin.

We accept it.

We say, *"that is just who I am. I can't help that; I can't change that about myself."*

Paul is saying *that is not good enough. That was acceptable when you were not in Christ, when the Old Man rules...but you are a new creation, you are God's man, God's woman....expect more of yourself. Demand more of yourself, stir yourself to righteous indignation.*

A failure to react with indignation and anger against sin and evil is a sign of moral decadence and of godlessness and irreligion.

Our passion to help the poor, to start churches, to be involved in missions, isn't something that we do once a year.

Our call to arms is not a gimmick to squeeze more money; it is a passionate commitment to give all that we can to change all that we must.

I am weak you say

I am small you cry

I am but one man

One woman

That is what Gideon said, look at what God did.

That is what Moses said, look at what God did.

God isn't looking for an army – he is looking for someone ticked off enough to do something.

Ticked off enough to say, ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Does injustice move you friend?

Do women being sold as slaves for sex make you angry? It should.

Little children being abducted, do you get angry at the thought of it?

You should.

Do the ravages of drugs and pornography on family and life, does it affect you? Or are you just glad it doesn't touch you?

Does poverty anger you? All these issues should.

4th thought – The context of Paul's writing:

Now remember that this is the context that Paul was writing in.

Ephesians 4:18-19 ESV

“They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.

They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.”

This is the context.

Our hearts had become hardened by sin.

Hardened to the voice of God.

Hard to His Word and his ways.

Greedy.

Impure.

Morally indifferent.

This is the heart of the religious.

Of the pagan.

Their hearts are past feeling.

Past any feeling of indignation or sorrow.

Nothing surprises them.

Everything is acceptable to them.

Martyn Lloyd Jones suggests that what Paul is actually saying is that:
You should be angry against these things.
Angry when you see it in your own life.
Angry when you see sin rampaging through our communities
and the lives of the ones you love.

You should not become complacent with this sin you see.
You should not be impartial to it.
You should be hardened to it.

We shrug our shoulders at atrocities around the world.
We shrug our shoulder at atrocities and crime in our school and
cities.
Texas has the highest rate in America of teenage 1st pregnancies and
also 2nd pregnancies.

And our answer is to vaccinate against STD's, hand out condoms,
teach on AIDS, and pay for abortions from the state funds.
When did we want so little for our little girls?
When did we settle for our boys being male and not men?

We shrug our shoulders.
We say that that is just how it is today.

Why?
When did it become ok to believe that the best thing for your daughter
is to be pregnant twice before she is 20 by some loser and end up
with AIDS or an abortion?

It became acceptable because we stopped being ticked off and
allowed the world to call us wozzers because we want something
better than they have.
We live by a different code than they do.

This is what Paul is dealing with.

He is saying...*Be angry!!!*
React against this.
Do not accept this!

Be true to yourself and your faith.
Don't be false.
Don't lie.

There are certain things that should make you militant.
John the Baptist was imprisoned and executed by Herod for boldly preaching against his adulterous marriage.
He stood for what was right in an age and a society where to speak out against the establishment meant death or imprisonment.
An absence of a sense of shame and of anger and of righteous indignation is always the hallmark of deep degradation and sinfulness, and of a loss of the sense of God.
Our Lord was angry when He observed manifestations of sin.
And what measures our approximation to Him is that we manifest a similar reaction when confronted by similar things.
It is our duty to be angry at certain points and with respect to certain matters.

5th thought- There is a Wrong sort of anger:

So we have looked at the right sort of anger, let's now conclude by looking at the wrong sort of anger.

First, we must never be bad-tempered people.

To be bad tempered, to fly off the handle, to be irritable and out of control is not acceptable.
It is utterly wrong

"Well I am just like that. That is how I was born"

Well friend, you have been Born Again!
This is a part of that old nature that must be put away; you can not use that argument, that justification.
You just can't blame it away.
The pressure of work.
The pressures of life.
The habits of a past ...you can't justify things like that.

Am I saying that you need to be perfect? NO
I am saying you can't make excuses.
That I can not make excuses.

We have to know who we are.
What makes us respond this way, and take responsibility for our life.

Paul puts it beautifully

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 ESV

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

Love isn't rude.
Love isn't easily provoked.

Yet the people we are rudest to, the people we are so easily provoked by are the ones we say love the most!
The person, who is easily provoked, is more likely to be angry in a sinful way. Provocation is so often a choice.
It is a little thing that annoys us, something that gets under our skin. We must recognize them and own them as our issues and deal with them as our problem and not as anyone else. John Calvin calls these angry responses

"When we go beyond the proper bounds, and are hurried into intemperate excesses."

Second, don't let the sun go down on your anger"

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

IN the KJV it says; don't let the sun go down on your wrath.

The word wrath is a stronger word than the word anger.
It means indignation, exasperation.
It talks of a retained anger.
A simmering anger.

It is something that you allow to fester.
Something that you allow to follow you from day to day.
Don't allow this condition to become permanent.

Have you ever met someone, and they are always angry about something?
You're not sure what it is.
They are not sure what it is....but they are just angry?

Somewhere along the line they didn't resolve an issue.
They allowed something to brew.
They allowed something to fester.
They allowed something to be bottled up.

Paul is saying, you can't allow that way of life to be yours any more.

Paul says don't let a small portion of time, don't let even an 8 hour sleep go between incident and reconciliation.
Don't let any sort of ill will between each other arise.
Don't take it to bed.

There have been times when Beccy and I have risen from our bed and gone and sat in the living room because an issue needed to be resolved.
We could not sleep because of tension.
We did not want to take it to our bed chamber.

What a horrible thing it is to lie awake all night trying not to touch toes!
Or rolling over and having a cuddle and then remembering..."*Oh, I am not talking to them!*"
What a waste of a good nights sleep and a great cuddle!

Amongst our church membership and leadership team we have a three day rule.

The rule is simply this, that if you have been hurt or slighted or you believe a misunderstanding has taken place you have three days to address the issue and resolve the issue, or you must let the issue go.

This is a clause that forces authenticity.

99% of church splits I believe do not happen because of theology, but personality.

People are not prepared to deal with the day to day issues of family life and they become victims and childish in their mindset and want to pick up their bat and ball and go home.

You can't build a church like that.
You can build a political institution
You can build a social club,
But not an army.

Third- Give no room to the devil.

"And give no opportunity to the devil".

Notice that Paul doesn't say that a righteous anger gives room to Satan.

He says it is a bitter unresolved anger that gives a platform for the devil to manifest in your life and relationships.

You give the devil room to destroy your friendship if you harbor bitterness or if you stay angry.

You destroy relationship

Anger and unresolved issues in life destroy most marriages.

Inability to resolve conflict destroys most business partnerships.

The devil loves it when we fight!

Sinful anger leads to holding grudges.

You desire vengeance.

You don't desire relationship,

or love,

or friendship,

You just desire to hurt someone because you were once hurt.

The devil loves this!

This is his territory.

Adam went to sleep one night with doubts in His mind planted by Satan.

Doubts as to the Word and Will of God.

He arose and sinned.

He slept on his doubts.

He slept on his “Parorgismos”, his internal seething, his fuming resentment that had arisen over his conversations with his wife.

All you are doing when you live like this is giving room for the devil, and an opportunity for all that you love to be destroyed and left in ruins at your feet.

Last thought- When and how do I deal with this stuff?

Immediately as soon as is practicable.

If you have been hurt,
or if you have hurt another.

Confront it.

Don't go to bed on it.

Put in a call.

Leave a message.

Tell someone that you need to discuss something that happened and you need to work it through with them.

You have to be forceful in your decision to do this.

Word of warning:

You have a biblical responsibility to air your grievousness, but someone else might not see it as their problem.

Again, what you may have is a personality issue not a scriptural issue.

They might not be the problem...you might be.

I had a guy once tell me that he has faithfully served over 17 ministries in 40 years and ALL of them have hurt him and used him up.

My reflection to him is that maybe they were not the problem, he was. Now I am not trying to be harsh, but if more than 3 people tell you have got pointy ears and a tail, maybe you're a donkey.

Again, what I think Paul is saying here is there are times to get angry at the state of the world, do so, but do not sin.

He is also saying that if you do get angry and you do sin, do not let the sun go down on the issue, do not deal with it in such a way as to give room to the devil.

YOU WILL HAVE CONFLICT IN YOUR FAMILY AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER.

YOU WILL HAVE CONFLICT IN THIS FAMILY AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER.

Just make your mind up now to be a tool against the devil or a fool of the devil.

Let's Pray.