

Holy Anger

Ephesians 4:26-27
Halifax: 23 March 2008

Introduction:

Some of you may have been expecting an Easter message today.

- I have, at various times, preached a message on the resurrection at the time that Easter is traditionally celebrated...
 - There is nothing wrong with preaching from a theme that is on the minds of our society at large...
- But it is also very important for all of you to know that no one but Christ has the authority to make an ordinance or a day holy...
 - A holy day is a day, like the Sabbath day, that the Lord blesses, as we are told in Genesis 2:3:
 - that the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.
 - But what does it mean for Him to bless a day?
 - Surely, it does mean that he makes the day blessed for its own sake...
 - No, He makes it a blessing for us...
 - Is that not what Jesus said when He declared to the Pharisees who had ruined the day by their endless traditions:
 - “The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.”
 - A holy day is a day set apart from all others to be a blessing to us...
 - It is a day when God promises to draw near to us, to strengthen our communion with Him, to deepen our love for Him, to make us more holy and more pure...
 - He promises to bless us in these ways as we observe the day in faith, looking to Him to do what He has promised.
 - Each Lord’s day, you should look for such a blessing from Him and count on it because He has promised.
 - But it is a vain and arrogant presumption for us to suppose that we can consecrate a day on the calendar and make it holy...
 - We can no more do this than we can invent new sacraments or new ordinances and expect the Lord to recognise them and bless us through them...

- Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and He alone is authorised to institute holy days and holy ordinances.
 - The Apostle Paul was very careful to say, when commanding the proper observance of the Lord's Supper,
 - 1 Cor 11:23: **I received from the Lord** that which I also delivered to you:
 - He wanted to make it clear that this was not some ordinance that he invented or that some other apostle or bishop or pope had invented.
 - It was something that Jesus, the head of the church, had instituted and appointed to be a blessing for us.
- The sad thing is that whenever churchmen take it upon themselves to institute holy days or holy ordinances,
 - these always seem to take a more important place than the ones the Lord Himself instituted.
 - As evidence of this, just look at all the people who are delighted to observe Christmas and Easter,
 - but who have no regard for the weekly observance of the Lord's Day.
 - They lay aside what God has commanded for their traditions.
 - And though they may find joy and pleasure and have many fond memories from these self-imposed holy days—
 - They derive no spiritual benefit from them at all.
 - Of course I don't mean by that to say that the Lord never blesses His people through their own institutions—
 - He is very merciful to us even as He was to Israel when they persisted in worshipping Him at the high places...
 - but He continually opposed their self-instituted worship and commanded them to worship only as He had appointed.
 - They were as stubborn about this as we are—
 - but we should not be so stubborn!
 - Even though a person believes he has benefited from the observance of Christmas or Easter or from some unauthorised ordinance does not justify such observance...
 - It is for us to recognise the authority of Jesus Christ who speaks through His Word,
 - and to seek Him and His blessing through those holy days and ordinances that He has appointed.

So today, as we are in the middle of a wonderful section in the book of Ephesians, I am going to continue with this series.

- We are in that portion of Ephesians where the Apostle Paul is giving us the Lord's counsel concerning how we are to walk worthy of our calling!
 - By the marvellous grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, you who believe have been called to be God's very own children.
 - God is at work in you to fill you with that love and holiness that characterises His household...
 - Through the death of Jesus Christ, He has pardoned all your sin,
 - and now by the working of the Holy Spirit,
 - He is shaping you and moulding you to live in sweet communion with Him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - If you are a believer,
 - there has already been a radical change in you which Paul describes as putting off the old man who is growing corrupt;
 - and putting on the new man who is created in true righteousness and holiness through Jesus Christ.
 - And now we are looking at some of the specific, concrete changes that are to be seen in us...
 - Last week, with verse 25, it was that we are put away lying and speak the truth to our neighbour...
 - And this week, with verse 26-27, it is that we are to see to it that our anger is a holy anger—
 - that is, that our anger is fully consecrated to God—
 - that it is anger that is pleasing to God,
 - anger that is appropriate and properly expressed.

This morning as we examine Ephesians 4:26-27, I am simply going to follow our text in my exposition:

- You will notice how it begins...

I. "Be angry."

A. Christian, this is something you are called to do...

1. "Be angry."

- This is an imperative—a command!

- The Lord is telling you, if you are a redeemed member of His household, that there are times when it is right for you to be angry.
 - Of course, this does not mean that you should be angry all the time.
 - It means that you should be angry when the occasion demands it.
2. Think about this...
- a. If you see God being blasphemed, or if you see someone cheating people in business, or if you see a man abusing his wife or his children,
 - Is this something you are supposed to be indifferent about?
 - Are you supposed to just flit along as one who is entirely unaffected? as one who doesn't care?
 - b. From another angle,
 - If you are a parent and you see your children sinning against God,
 - are you be complacent about this?
 - c. And what about the elders of the church?
 - Are the elders in the church supposed look the other way when there is sin in the church?
 - when they learn that a young man is living in immorality?
 - or when they discover that someone who is big financial supporter in the church is running his business on the Lord's Day?

TRANS> Surely you can see that anger is a good thing when it rises against blasphemy and injustice.

B. Let me tell you what proper anger is...

1. First of all, what is anger itself?
 - a. Anger is the ability that God has given you to be stirred up or agitated when you see some injustice.
 - b. The Greek word used here is *orgizw* which refers to anger in general—it is very much like our word anger in it's scope of meaning.
 - But interestingly, this is a quotation from Psalm 4:4 which in Hebrew uses the word *zgr raw-gaz'* where we have *orgizw* in Greek,
 - and the word *zgr* speaks an agitation or a stirring of a person, whether in anger or in fear...
 - It means to be stirred up within—to be unsettled about what is going on around you...

- c. Now of course, you can be stirred up about a lot of things...
 - You can be agitated because someone snubbed you—or because you realise that they cheated you—or because you were not recognised...
 - But when you are stirred up because you love God and you see him being dishonoured (whether by you or by others),
 - or when you are agitated within because you love your neighbour and you see some injustice being done to him...
 - that is obviously a virtue!
2. Indeed, godly anger is one of the most highly commended virtues in scripture!
- a. One of the most praised virtues of God Himself is His wrath and anger...
 - 1) From Genesis to Revelation, the Lord of Heaven and Earth is presented to us as a God who hates sin and who pours out His wrath on sinners.
 - a) We are told that as soon as our first parents sinned, the Lord drove them from His presence...
 - and sentenced them and their posterity to suffering and death but for the intervention of His grace and mercy.
 - b) We are told that at the end of the world, the Lord Jesus will come with sword in hand to take vengeance on his adversaries,
 - and that when He does, He will be admired at by all who have come to know the truth.
 - It will be His glory to execute the wrath that He now restrains until that day.
 - 2) Anger is never presented as something that God is ashamed of...
 - It is His glory to hate wickedness and to deal severely with it.
 - Of course we, being wicked, are not comfortable with this about God.
 - It makes us terrified... and well it should!
 - And it causes many to speak against God—
 - They look at all the suffering in the world (which is God's angry response against our apostasy from Him)
 - and they say that God is not good!
 - What?
 - Have we really gone so low as to think that the One who vehemently opposes evil with perfect rectitude is himself evil?

- Have we so turned things around that we call the judge who punishes wrongdoing evil instead of the wrongdoers?
- How twisted we are!

TRANS> But now I want you to see further...

- Not only does our Lord show anger to be a virtue in Himself, but...

b. He also commends godly anger in His people.

1) Consider what we read earlier about Phinehas, the Son of Eleazar...

- He is the man in Numbers 25 who ran Zimri and the Midianite woman through with a spear when they were having ritual sex in defiance of the Lord.
- The Lord Himself commends this man for his righteous anger as we read in Numbers 25:10-13:
 - Numbers 25:10-13: Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.'"
- This passage is to be understood in the context of Israel as a covenant people, united together before the Lord in such a way that if sin was committed by any one of them, the whole community was chargeable until the offender was brought to judgement.
 - Phinehas was the one who cared enough about God's honour to take action, and by that action, he atoned for the sin of the nation.

2) Another marvellous example of godly anger is that of David when he went after Goliath...

- David was stirred up against Goliath, not because of some personal offence, for David did not know this man personally...
 - but because Goliath had defied the armies of the living God...
 - David keeps saying things like,
 - 1 Sam 17:26: "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"
- It was because of this attitude that the Lord calls David a man after His own heart...

- David is more concerned about the glory of God than he is about his own comfort or security...
 - He burns with anger when the Lord's name is defied because he loves the Lord.
- 3) David was of the same spirit as the Lord Jesus when he drove out the money changers from the temple...
 - and said, "Zeal for your house has eaten me up!"
 - Indeed! What zeal our Lord Jesus has for God's house!
 - We see it on the one hand when He goes to the cross in order to redeem us...
 - And we shall see it again when He comes at the last day to judge His enemies causing all heaven to erupt with their Hallelujahs!
- 4) There are so many other examples of godly anger that might be given...
 - That of Nehemiah and Moses and the Corinthian church...

TRANS> But how rare this zeal for God's house is in our day!

- How rare this godly anger!
 - Instead of this godly anger that characterises the new man in Christ,
 - we find that sinful, abusive anger that characterises the old man...
- Thus, the apostle Paul, having said,
 - "Be angry,"
 - now adds...

II. And do not sin!

- A. We need this commandment because, as you well know, sinful anger is almost the only kind of anger we ever see in this world...
 - 1. You sin when you take this God-given ability to be stirred and agitated about injustice,
 - and turn it upon something that is not unjust but that just happens to offend you...
 - or something that is indeed unjust, but that you overact to or react in ways that God has not authorised you to act...
 - Someone pulls out in front of you and you curse them...

- or they don't remember to show appreciation for your service, so you burn with resentment toward them.
2. Because this sort of anger is so common, we can hardly think of any other kind.
 - We automatically think of what is sinful when we think of anger...
 - We think of that anger that does not arise out of love for God and love for neighbour, but out of a perverted self-love—out of pettiness and sensitivity!
 - We think of a perverted loss of self-control that causes anger to harm instead of heal.
 3. It all comes back to the problem Paul identified in verses 17-24—
 - The problem of living without reference to God and His truth—
 - of walking in the futility of our minds like the Gentiles—
 - of making ourselves the standard instead of the Lord,
 - so that we measure injustice by how much a person's actions offend us rather than by what God says about it!
 - Anger rising from personal offence is always sinful anger...
 - I don't mean that there is no such thing as godly anger when wrong has been done to you,
 - but what I mean by personal offence is that you are angered without reference to the Lord and His standard...

TRANS> Obviously, if we are to obey this command to be angry and not sin, we must learn how to distinguish between sinful anger and righteous anger...

B. Let me give you some examples of sinful anger and of the occasions out of which it arises...

1. First, sinful anger is often found in those who are guilty because they have not dealt with their own sin...
 - Take Bill...
 - Bill had been wasting time at work.
 - He knew that it was wrong and he was troubled by it, but instead of confessing to the Lord and asking for forgiveness and grace to change,
 - he just pushed it aside.
 - As he drives home from work, he finds himself easily irritated by everything from potholes to slow drivers...
 - After he comes home, it's not long until his wife and children realise that it is the part of wisdom to stay as far from Bill as possible...

- After shouting at his son for leaving his hat on the floor and lashing out at his wife for asking him to help her with the baby when he has to take out the garbage,
 - everyone is walking about on eggshells.
- Bill's anger, you see, is entirely directed against those who have crossed him...
 - He is the centre of the world because he is not giving place to the Lord.
 - His anger is not toward real injustices according to God's standards, but petty offences against himself...
 - He has put himself in the place of God and judges everything by whether it pleases Bill or not!
 - This is sinful anger that arose out of his own guilt.
- 2. Closely related to this, sinful anger is often poured out upon the righteous because they are righteous...
 - When Jesus came into the world, the Jewish leaders frequently became angry with him—but why?
 - It was because Jesus was righteous and they were unrighteous...
 - and every time He came around them with His light of truth, their sin was exposed.
 - They couldn't keep up their outward show of righteousness when He was present.
 - When they were thus exposed, they might have humbled themselves and come to Christ for the cleansing He promised.
 - But instead, they began to look for how they might eliminate Him.
 - That is what you do with Christ when you are proud...
 - Instead of letting the light of His truth shine into the depths of you and show you all the corruption that is there...
 - you try to snuff out the light...
 - If Christ were to come, you would want Him crucified too.
 - Oh my friends, this is so important!
 - Welcome the light – don't hate the light!
 - The light is your friend!
 - It exposes you, but it also shows you the way to be justified by turning to Jesus for forgiveness!

- This anger toward the righteous because they are righteous is very common...
 - The Lord tells us to expect it if we live a godly life.
 - Expect people to examine you closely, looking for every bit of dirt they can find...
 - expect them to be angry.
 - But don't we do this as Christians too?
 - Are there not times when someone who is doing right where we are slack makes us angry?
 - This is the kind of anger that Paul is telling you to put away.
3. Thirdly, sinful anger is found where there is covetousness...
- When you are jealous of your brother because he is more successful or more popular or more appreciated—or whatever...
 - you can be sure that sinful anger is not far away...
 - You are just waiting for him to make a wrong move to justify your offence with him.
 - You know that it is not right for you to be jealous of him,
 - but instead of repenting, you go looking for a real occasion to get angry with him about—
 - Of course you don't admit to yourself that you are doing that, but that is what you do when covetousness is present.
4. Fourthly, sinful anger is found where past offences have never been dealt with...
- If someone has offended you and you never bothered to reconcile with them,
 - you can be pretty sure that your anger will be stirred over every little irritation—every time you are crossed...
 - I have seen this again and again in ministering to couples, and even to entire churches when they are divided.
 - It is amazing how petty their quarrels are—they bring out this long list of offences—
 - that this other person did not thank me, that they did not warmly greet me, that they forget to ask about my dog's surgery, that they borrowed a book and never returned it... on and on it goes...
 - So much anger for so many things!
 - but none of these are really important enough to justify breaking fellowship with your brother from whom Christ died!

- Was this not the problem with Absalom?
 - His father David had not dealt with his half brother who had violated his sister...
 - but instead of reconciling with his father,
 - Absalom began to find more and more fault with his father until he was at last completely swallowed up with bitterness.

TRANS> So you see these ways that anger is sinful because there is no real warrant to be angry.

- But there is a second way for anger to be sinful...

C. Anger is also sinful when it is wrongly expressed...

1. There are two basic ways that anger is wrongly expressed...

- by blowing up or by clamming up.
 - a. You clam up when you “just don’t say anything.”
 - You become sullen and cold toward the other person.
 - Your friend with whom you are angry can tell that something is wrong between you, but you refuse to say a word about it.
 - I once spoke to two young women who had been angry with each other for two years over a misunderstanding...
 - and because neither one would come forward to work things out,
 - they brooded and became worse and worse enemies as each day went by.

TRANS> That’s clamming up.

b. You all know what blowing up is...

- You’ve all seen it and most of you have done it...
 - This is when you rashly rise to boiling point and give vent to your anger in an uncontrolled expression...
 - You are like a bomb going off...
 - Your concern in such a case is not to correct what is wrong, but to lash out at the person with whom you are angry—
 - to strike out at them because they have offended you!
 - to take vengeance.

TRANS> Clamming up and blowing up are opposite responses to offences, but they has one thing in common:

2. Whether you clam up or blow up, you are taking vengeance into your own hands.
 - a. It is that same problem of not living your life with reference to God and His truth...
 - Instead you are walking in futility of the Gentiles who do not have God's truth.
 - You are handling things in your own way, as if there is no God to instruct you—
 - You have forgotten that vengeance belongs to the Lord.
 - b. In Romans 12, the Lord tells us that vengeance does not belong to us, but to Him...
 - 1) He says that we are to give Him His place...
 - He is the judge and it is up to Him to decide how sin is to be dealt with.
 - When you avenge,
 - you take matters into your own hands as if you are God!
 - Give Him His place lest you stir up His wrath against you!

TRANS> But there is something that is very important for you to understand about God's vengeance...

- 2) Leaving it to God to avenge does not mean that there is never anything for you to do when you have just cause to be angry with your neighbour.
 - In fact, you are to act as God's minister of justice in accordance with your calling from God!
 - Each one of you has a role in this,
 - but you are to make sure that you do not exceed the bounds of what God has appointed...
 - In other words, you are to do no more and no less than He has appointed for you to do when you find injustice.
 - a) Take a look at Romans 12 that I just quoted from and you will see what I am saying...
 - You see in verse 17 that it instructs you not to repay evil for evil—and that in verse 19 it says “do not avenge yourselves.”

- Instead, you are supposed to overwhelm your enemy by doing good to him.
 - But then you get to chapter 13, and you are introduced to this idea that God has ministers of justice who are called (look at v 4) “God’s avengers to execute wrath on the one who practices evil”!
 - In other words, there are people who represent the Lord on earth by exercising his vengeance—
 - not personal vengeance, but they are to exercise God’s vengeance upon evil doers according to God’s directives in His Word—
 - They are not to exceed the boundaries that he has set...
 - These ministers are not called to bring God’s final judgement upon anyone...
 - that will happen at the last day...
 - But they are to restrain evil as His ministers.
- b) The ministers of justice spoken of in Romans 13 are said to have been given the sword...
- That means that the Lord has authorised them to execute people for wrong doing...
 - That is why when a governor executes, say, a murderer, the governor has not murdered.
 - He is acting as God’s servant.
 - But understand, by giving him the authority to execute, God does not give the civil magistrate license to do as he pleases.
 - He is not authorised to use the sword willy nilly, as Manasseh did when he executed children because he didn’t like the way they looked at him...
 - God promises that he will severely judge magistrates who operate according to their own standards rather than His standards.
- c) God has other ministers of justice who execute His vengeance or his discipline as well.
- (i) The elders in the church are given the power to remove members who refuse to repent.
- Here again, they are strictly accountable to conscientiously act only in God’s name—as His ministers...

- God will deal severely with them if they act according to their own interests instead of His.
- (ii) Parents have been given the rod and reproof by which to minister to their children.
- In our land, the civil magistrate has overstepped their bounds by forbidding the rod to parents, but they have no authority to do this.
 - Parents, however, are not authorised by God to use the rod or even reproof upon their children except as servants of God...
 - It is not their own, but the Lord's discipline that they are to exercise upon their children.
 - Just as the Lord promises to promote justice in the land through the faithful ministry of the civil magistrate,
 - so He promises to promote wisdom in the home through the faithful ministry of parents.
- (iii) As individuals, you have all been given the authority to admonish your neighbour in accordance with your calling...
- If those who are in authority over you sin, you are authorised to appeal to them with meekness and respect...
 - and you are authorised to refuse to obey them if they issue unlawful commands—
 - as when the civil magistrate told those Christ had sent forth to preach not to preach—
 - or when a parent asks his child to steal or lie—
 - or when the elders of the church ask you to participate in an idolatrous worship service.
 - You are also authorised to report those who abuse their authority to their authorities—
 - And abused wife can go to the elders about her husband if he is a member of the church...
 - An abused church member can go to the Presbytery...
 - and so on.

TRANS> But understand that if you, in your anger,

- go beyond the limitations that God has put upon you for expressing your anger...
 - If you begin to express it in your own way rather than in the way that He has appointed—

- if you lash out in uncontrolled rage or if you clam up when you are called to act—
- then you have taken vengeance into your own hands...
- You have taken God's place and put yourself in direct competition with Him!
 - It will not go well for you unless you repent.
- And this leads us to our last point—
 - and that is:

III. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.

- This is about the urgency of acting when anger arises!
- A. That is to say, you must do something about your anger immediately!
1. Whether it is righteous anger or unrighteous anger, you are never to let it just sit around without doing any thing...
 - The stirring of anger is a call to action, so you need to act!
 - a. If your anger is an anger that is unwarranted,
 - then you need to suppress it at once...
 - 1) If you are like Bill who lashed out at his wife and children because he was guilty about wasting time at work,
 - don't leave it alone...
 - Repent of the your sin that caused you to be so nasty toward them...
 - But also go to them at once and ask them to forgive you...
 - Tell them that you sinned against them and abused your place as the head of your home and that God has dealt with you...
 - Do not let it spill over into the next day.
 - 2) Or if you have taken the sullen approach...
 - Perhaps you are angry with your parents and you have been sulking and showing disrespect to them—
 - only because they ask you to help with the chores around the house and you were feeling sorry for yourself...
 - Go to them and ask them to forgive you...
 - Be reconciled!

- And parents, if you know something is wrong, go to your child and find out what it is—at once—don't let the anger grow roots...
 - The longer you wait, the harder it will be to pull it up.
 - Don't let him go on as one who is unreconciled!
- b. If, on the other hand, your anger is warranted—if you have seen sin committed and you are stirred up about it...
- 1) Don't let the sun go down on that anger either!
 - If you care about your brother, go to him at once and show him the wrong he has done...
 - Urge him to repent.
 - If he won't hear you, then take another with you as we are told to do in Matthew 18.
 - Your goal is to do everything you can to restore the one you are angry with... as soon as possible—because you love him.
 - 2) You who are in authority, don't think that you have a right to see sin and to do nothing...
 - You ought to be stirred—not to uncontrolled rage—but to action!
 - You must go and deal with the sin in the way that God has appointed.
2. Please understand the urgency here with this command that you not let the sun go down on your anger!
- a. In many ways, we have been harmed by our entertainment culture...
 - We love to play with our emotions through media...
 - In a movie, you can experience anger, fear, love, and any number of things without having to do anything...
 - That is a problem because emotions are supposed to move us!
 - If they are proper emotions, regulated by God, they stir us to action...
 - but in a movie, you don't have to do a thing...
 - In other words, love is not just to be felt, it is to move you to serve those you love...
 - Fear is not just an experience.
 - If it is proper, it needs to lead to you to take action to protect yourself—

- For example, if you fear God's judgement, you are to repent and flee to Christ to find salvation in Him...
 - If you fear man, you are to repent of the fear and fear God instead.
- So with anger...
 - Anger is to move you to do whatever you can to correct injustices that are done.
- b. But of course there are different ways to act before the sun goes down...
- There are times when you may not be able to go to a brother right away, but you are to at least be making plans to do so as soon as you can—
 - The thing to do before the sun goes down is to put those plans in place.
 - Don't wait around until tomorrow!
 - That is not the way for God's children behave!
- c. There are also those times when you deal with your anger by shaking the dust off your feet as a testimony against wickedness...
- This is done, for example, when you have gone to someone and they will not hear you...
 - And you have used all the lawful means that are at your disposal to get them to hear... and they still won't hear...
 - Then it is time to turn them over to God so that He can deal with them.
 - You no longer need to carry the wrath around with you.
 - You are to move on.
 - You have done all that He asks of you.

TRANS> So you see what the main point is here...

- You are to deal with your anger, either by repenting of it if it is not warranted, or by acting to rectify wrongs if it is warranted.
- In either case, you are not to let the sun go down upon it...

B. If you do not deal with your anger at once, the apostle says that you give place to the Devil...

1. What does that mean?

- a. It means you give him an opportunity to wreak havoc in the body of Christ or in your family or in your nation...
 - You leave a foothold for him and he will make the most of it...
- 1) Remember what we are told in Peter:
 - 1 Peter 5:8: your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”
 - He is constantly looking for an opportunity to get in and work his influence.
 - He is constantly trying to work his way in to divide and to deceive.
- 2) Consider—Adam should have been stirred to anger when Satan came into the garden and began to try to entice his wife away from God...
 - He should have sent him packing at once.
 - But if he was not stirred, then that was wrong because he should have been.
 - If he was stirred, then he should have acted.
 - But for whatever reason, he did not act and trouble ensued... even the destruction of the whole human race.
- b. The Bible is clear that Satan is unable to destroy a believer...
 - 1) Jesus warned Peter that Satan desired to have him, but he also said, “but have prayed for your that your faith will not fail.”
 - And it did not—Peter was kept by the power of God.
 - He stumbled, but he did not fall away.
 - 2) Likewise, in 1 John 5, we are told that wicked one is unable to touch the believer.
 - This does not mean that he is unable to do anything to us...
 - the context has to do with apostasy.
 - The point is that Satan cannot make a believe turn away from God as he was able to make Adam and Eve turn away in the Garden.
- c. But you see, he is looking to do whatever he can...
 - And what he can do is weasel his way into the church when believers let the sun go down on their anger.
- 2. There are two ways he can take advantage of us if we let the sun go down on our wrath...
 - a. First, if we are stirred in anger for just reasons and we do nothing,

- Whatever the sin was that stirred our anger is allowed to flourish!
 - If believers are angry, but do nothing when they see false teaching in the church,
 - the false teaching goes unchecked until it has taken deep root!
 - Paul warned the Ephesian elders that even some of their own number were wolves in sheep's clothing who would arise to teach perverse things...
 - Satan plants his agents right in the church.
 - We are right to be angered by them—
 - but if we do not deal with them by insisting upon their repentance...
 - they will gain such a foothold that we will hardly be able to remove them!
- b. Secondly, he can destroy our peace so as to divide and make our ministry ineffective to each other.
- 1) This is so common and so dreadful...
 - When anger is not resolved, it sets us against one another...
 - And this can grow to the point that we are no longer able to even work with each other in the body.
 - There are church members who are so divided with their pastors that they can no longer receive the word from them...
 - This is just what Satan wants, and he will put his agents to work to do all they can to foster and enflame those angry passions.
 - 2) And the very worst effect of this is upon those who are members of the covenant community, but who are not yet converted...
 - How many covenant children have been separated from their parents by unresolved anger!
 - The parents have not repented of their unjust anger and the children have grown resentful and angry themselves...
 - Instead of following their parents in the faith, they do as Absalom and begin to find faults...
 - You see, when there is unresolved anger, it sets us against one another.
 - This is an awful thing...

- The longer the anger is allowed to remain, the more Satan uses it to drive wedges between us those we are called to minister to.
- There are millions in hell for this very reason!

And so in conclusion, I would plead with you this morning—

- Do everything that is in your power to live in reconciliation with each other!
 - As much as lies in you, do not allow unresolved anger to fester!
 - Deal with it as soon as it arises in a way that pleases God—

Some of you will say,

- but how am I to deal with my own anger—if I have unwarranted anger and bitterness toward others and I just cannot shake it?
 - The best remedy for that is a good dose of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - Come to grips with the fact that you have so sinned against God that you fully deserve to be under His wrath forever and ever...
 - and yet the Lord has been pleased to forgive you if you have come to Jesus Christ.
 - He has forgiven you even though it required Him to put His son to grief and agony to atone for our sins!
- Now the question for you is this...
 - If God has forgiven you for so great a sin, can you continue to harbour that vile bitterness and resentment toward your brother?
 - Let the knowledge of Christ cut you to the heart and let all that poison come out.
 - It has no place in your heart!
 - Surely you don't want to go around with that bitterness and anger, do you?
 - It is a miserable, dreadful way to live...
 - Don't you see—Jesus came in order to redeem you...
 - He came that you might be forgiven...
 - And that being forgiven, you might learn to forgive.