

Walk Worthy

of the calling with which you were called.
Ephesians 4:1-5:21

PART TWO – WALK IN TRUTH – EPH. 4:17-32

LESSON 27 – BE ANGRY WITHOUT SIN – EPH. 4:26-27

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Ephesians 4:25-32

- ▶ 25 Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another. **26 “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil.** 28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. 29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Speech and Attitude

- ▶ How does a saved man walk, think, live, talk, and act? We have seen that it is a different walk than the Gentile, that is, the one without Christ. It is new. It is empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is radically different than the world around us. And as we learned last week, part of the new walk for this new man is speaking the truth. We, as followers of Jesus Christ, are to love the truth – to crave it! And we are to abhor deceit and shun lying.
- ▶ Today in the next two verses we see that not only is our speech different, but even our attitudes and motives are changed. We are told matter-of-factly, “be angry and do not sin.”

Good, Bad, Or Ugly?

- ▶ This is something we need to think through. You see, this reveals yet another victim in the war of political correctness. We have been led to believe that anger is always bad, destructive, evil, and sinful. We as Christians are told that we should be passive doormats who never raise our voices or act out of anger.
- ▶ As a result, many in the church today feel guilty when they become angry even if they are angry at themselves for their sin. The self-help puff me up at all costs doctrine has been bought hook, line, and sinker. And so we are afraid to be angry.

Anger Defined

- ▶ What we fail to realize is that anger is a natural response to wrongdoing and injustice! In fact, if we are to define the term anger specifically, the word used in the Scripture means “deep determination and conviction.”
- ▶ It is not wrath. What is wrath? Wrath is what most people think anger is. Wrath is explosive rage. And while wrath is listed several times in lists of sin, anger is not the same thing.
- ▶ It is true, no doubt, that anger can be sinful, but let us not fall for the lie that all anger is sinful and bad.

Anger: Good or Bad

- ▶ Two factors help us determine whether our anger is good or bad.
- ▶ The first is motive. What is the motivation behind why we are angry? What is it that has resulted in our becoming angered?
- ▶ The second factor is purpose. In other words, why are we angry? What is the purpose for our anger? What do we seek to accomplish through being angry?
- ▶ If we have a right motive and a just purpose, then we are justified in our anger. It is right to be angry because of sin. It is right to be angry for the purpose of protecting the innocent and upholding justice. Good anger is anger that is motivated by a love for truth and a purpose of upholding righteousness.

Anger: Good or Bad

- ▶ Bad anger is anger that is motivated by selfishness or pride. Sinful anger is anger that has as its purpose inflicting pain or vengeance on someone.
- ▶ Now remember, we are fighting this idea that tells us that all anger is sinful and has no place in the life of a believer. Can we demonstrate from the Scriptures that there is a good anger, a sinless anger? Can we really prove that it is possible to be angry without sin?

Anger: Good or Bad

- ▶ Consider David when in Psalm 69:9 he writes, “Zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.” He is zealous, that is stirred up and angry. Why? What is his motive? Upholding the holiness of the habitation of God. And his purpose? To share in the reproaches of those who mock God. This is a good anger.
- ▶ We see that David was angry with just cause. But to make the case even more plain I hope that we would all agree that Jesus never sinned. So if He never sinned and yet He became angry could we then say that anger is not always sinful? Let us look at a few verses from the gospels.

Anger: Good or Bad

- ▶ When Jesus met a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath day, Jesus knew that the crowd and the Pharisees were watching His every move. He knew that they believed that it was unlawful to heal on the Sabbath. Jesus who cannot sin saw their attitudes and their hearts, and in Mark 3:5 we read, “And when He had looked around at them 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.”
- ▶ His motive was a desire to glorify God and heal this man. His purpose was to discount the false teaching of those who were watching Him so critically. And their sin and false doctrine made Him angry!

Anger: Good or Bad

- ▶ We also see in Matthew 21:12 that Jesus approached those who were defiling the Temple by making it a marketplace (interesting, isn't that exactly what the church growth and seeker sensitive movements are doing today?) and He acted out of anger! "Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves."
- ▶ This was no weak and mild Jesus. He was MAD. He turned tables over. He chased people out of the Temple porch.

Anger: Good or Bad

- ▶ Likewise in John 2:15, a report from an earlier time when He also cleaned out the Temple (yes, He did it twice), tells us, “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 made a whip and He used it!
- ▶ These are examples of righteous anger. There was no sin. There was no out of control wrath. But there was passion, negative emotions, and violent action. But no sin.
- ▶ So where does sinful anger come from? How can we tell the difference?

Sinful Anger

- ▶ First, sinful anger is exposed by the very things we have already been discussing. Sinful anger flows from a wrong motive and a sinful purpose.
- ▶ We see the best example in Matthew 5:21-22 where we are shown the ultimate expression of sinful anger from the motive through to the action.
- ▶ “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.

Sinful Anger

- ▶ We know it is sinful to murder, to unlawfully kill an innocent person. Hopefully, most of us would certainly stop far short of actually choking the life out of someone, but murder begins with the motive of sinful anger.
- ▶ To be angry without a cause – for no good reason – is to be angry in a sinful manner. To belittle or demean, to hatefully and vengefully talk down to someone, to call them a moron or an idiot, of worse, a fool, that is to be speaking and feeling out of the same motive that drives us to murder.

Sinful Anger

- ▶ We also see secondly that sinful anger has a focus on self while righteous anger has a focus on sin.
- ▶ Sinful anger is focused inwardly. It is selfish and conceited. Are we angry because someone sinned against God or are we angry because they sinned against us? If they sinned against us are we right to be angry? Maybe. But if we are spiteful and vindictive then this is the first clue that our anger has transgressed the standard of God's Word and has moved into the realm of sin.

Prolonged Anger

- ▶ One more point to think about before we finish today is that we must beware of prolonged anger. Even if we are right in being angry, we must not allow ourselves to continue to be angry. Prolonged anger can easily and quickly turn into bitterness. This is why we are given the command that we not allow the sun to set while we are angry. In other words, work it out before the end of the day and do not hold on to it overnight, much less for days, months, or years.
- ▶ According to 2 Cor. 2:11 bitterness opens the door for Satan take advantage of us. If we hang on to anger, we are prone to see that anger turn from good to bad very quickly. This gives place to the devil. If we are ignorant of the devices of the devil, if we are failing to discern and are dull of hearing, then Satan will take advantage of us. He will manipulate us emotionally and as we are angry, he will seek to find a way to bring that anger to bear the fruit of bitterness.

Bitterness

- ▶ And bitterness, as we will learn later in detail, is dangerous. Hebrews 12:15 tells us, “looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”
- ▶ Bitterness is an enemy of grace. It defiles many. It traps us in hateful and vindictive emotions, thoughts, words, and actions.
- ▶ Remember today, there is a right way and a wrong way to be angry. When you find that you are angry stop and take a close look at your motives and purpose. Why are you angry? What do you think your anger will accomplish? And if you find you are angry for the right reasons you can rejoice and move on. Don't linger. But if you find that you have been sinfully angry then you have transgressed the Word of God and must repent.

Be Angry without Sin

- ▶ Don't get mad at yourself for being angry.
- ▶ Don't write all anger off as bad.
- ▶ Don't excuse sinful anger.
- ▶ Learn to tell the difference.
- ▶ Believe it or not we really do need more people in the church to be angry for the right reasons.

- ▶ Next Lesson: Working for Good – Eph. 4:28