**Brought to Life; Brought Together**

**Walking Worthy: How Can we Be Angry Yet not Sin?**

**Ephesians 4:26-27**

May 10, 2020

David Taylor

We are continuing our series in Ephesians, Brought to Life; Brought Together. As I have said, Ephesians can be divided into two sections, chapters one through three describe what *God has done in us* through Christ while chapters four through six call us to *live out what God has done in us*, what Paul calls walking worthy. Last week we saw that walking worthy means putting off the old self and putting on the new self, applied to lying and truthfulness.

**Good and Right Anger (25, 31)**

We are commanded to be angry here and commanded not to be angry later in the chapter (31). So one form of anger is right and good and one form of anger is wrong and sinful. As sinful humans who are evil (Lk 11:13; Eph 2), we are characterized by sinful anger. Even as Christians, we struggle with sinful anger which is why the bible warns us against it ($4:31). It is characteristic of our old self (Jms 1:20 Mat 5:22-25). We all know what it looks like. It is getting angry over inconveniences and lashing out. It is getting angry because our pride is bruised so we seek to hurt the offender. It is getting angry like Jonah over the death of a plant providing shade rather than caring for the welfare of 120,000 (4:9-11). It comes from deceived desires which cloud our judgment so that it’s ultimate end is murder (Mat 5:21). We must wage war against it and all every deceived desire of the old self and not coddle them like spoiled children. The old sinful self is always lurking in the dark recesses of our hearts, waiting for an opportune time to strike. The consequence of sinful anger is that we hurt people, harm relationships, cause divisions, lead to a host of other sins. Anger is like nuclear power. It’s energy can be used to create bombs which destroy life or it’s energy can be used to create power plants assist human flourishing. Not all anger destroys, here Paul commands us to be anger so lets look at what he means.

Good anger is that negative emotion toward what makes God angry, sin and evil. But God is not fundamentally angry. Anger is only the byproduct of his righteousness. God’s righteousness means that he always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the standard of what is right.[[1]](#footnote-1) God’s anger is his reaction to the perversion of his goodness and the twisting of all that he made right. Any perversion is evil, twisting and disfiguring God’s glory. Evil poisons and distorts reality like a broken mirror. God’s righteousness demands that he be angry over every destructive perversion and that he mete out justice that is commensurate against those who commit such evil. So, God demands we get angry over the perversion of what he made good and right. Human anger is good and right when we get angry over evil that profanes God’s holiness and perverts his goodness and seeks to correct it. In Mark three Jesus is angry and grieved with the Pharisees for trying to trap him doing for doing good on the Sabbath, having twisted God’s good command to observe the Sabbath for human rest into a legalistic demand stifling human flourishing. In his anger, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their unbelief and heals the man (Mark 3:1-6). In his anger, Jesus defended the good and rebuked evil. Good anger is anger toward sin that distorts and perverts God righteousness and goodness and moral character. Good anger is like nuclear energy harnessed in a nuclear plant to assist human flourishing. Good anger responds to sin and evil and seeks to rectify it.

**Keeping Good Anger Holy**

How does one be angry over sin and evil yet not sin? Paul admonishes us two ways. First he tells us to resolve it quickly, do not let the sun go down on your anger. That is, do not harbor anger, nurse it, let it fester. You could say, do not let another day go by without dealing with your anger. When we don’t deal with our anger, even good anger, it is like a cancer that grows, leading to sin and harm. It leads us to other sins like unforgiveness. It does not go away it goes under and grows. Anger is often because of unforgiveness. Jesus demands that we forgive others (Mat 6:12; Eph 4:32), by not holding their sin against them. But forgiveness does not mean that the relationship remains the same when the offense is great. So, resolve it quickly. The second admonition grows out of this first one. When we do not resolve it quickly, we open a door for Spiritual attack, give no opportunity for the devil. Anger that is nursed becomes a playground for the devil. And his goal is to get you to walk in unbelief, idolatry, and destroy the unity of the body of Christ. The word translated no opportunity means inhabited space, a foothold. Anger left unchecked creates a direct affront for attacking and influencing you. Unresolved anger creates an opportunity for Satan to wreak havoc in your life, your relationships. Marriage’s and families and churches are destroyed by anger.

How to overcome sinful anger:

* Recognize anger is sinful but you cannot just stop it.
* Be thankful that God expressed his anger toward his Son on the cross for me. Jesus died under the weight of God’s wrath, his righteous anger, bearing the weight of my sin.
* Ask for God’s forgiveness for your sin, repent and ask for grace to overcome anger, to save you from your anger, for strength to put off the old self and put on the new self
* Finally, renew your mind, engage with God’s word, meditate on Scripture that talks about anger.
* Then think about why we do not get angry over the things God does? Because we need renewing of our minds.

**Life Group Questions:**

1. What is the difference between right and sinful anger?
2. What are reasons we get sinfully angry?
3. Why does Paul say not to let the sun go down on your anger?
4. What happens when we do not deal with our anger?
5. Why does Paul warn us against not giving an opportunity to the devil?
6. Tell of a time that you had righteous anger?
7. Why do we not get rightly angry over the things God gets angry about?
8. How do we replace sinful anger with right anger?
9. How is God speaking to me in this message?
10. How does this passage relate to my own discipleship?
11. How does this message help me in making disciples?

1. Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)