

Sunsets and Anger Don't Mix – Ephesians 4:26-27

Introduction – What does it mean to be a man or woman who has put off the old man and has put on the new? What does this look like? In the midst of his commands, Paul is painting a picture of the new humanity, a new way of living, a people who no longer are enslaved to give themselves over in defeat to sinful practices which separated them from God and from one another. There is a way of looking at these commands that feels like a burden; but there is a way to hear these commands as though the Spirit were saying, “you are free from these old ways now.”

A Righteous Anger – These verses begin with a command “Be angry.” It is possible to be obediently angry. Jesus is our example. He was angry and grieved with the Pharisees who thought it wrong for Jesus to heal a man on the Sabbath (Mark 3:5), and called a ruler of a synagogue “Hypocrite!” in a similar situation with a woman who needed to be healed (Luke 13:15). Jesus was certainly angry when He made a whip of cords and drove out the money changers in the temple (John 2:15). The “*wrath of God*” revealed in the Old and New Testament is righteous and just (Rom 1:18, Rev 6:17) and is the basis for the work of Christ on the cross. Paul praised the Corinthian church for their righteous anger over their own sin which in part led to their repentance (2 Cor 7:10-11).

Testing that Anger (James 2:19-20) – The stoics believe that we should have no emotions; the Christian teaches rather that emotions are a gift from God but are to be governed by His Word. Godly anger, as opposed to man's anger, comes slowly and so is well managed. It comes after one has been swift to hear (and understand) and slow to speak. It doesn't linger upon one's conscience and so we do not go to sleep with it and it doesn't provoke us to sin (Eph 4:26). It produces righteousness rather than giving a foothold for the devil.

“...and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath” – It is worthy to note that Paul quotes Psalm 4:4a and then interprets and applies Psalm 4:4b-5 in this command. The Lord knows exactly where our temptations lie even if we begin with righteous anger. We live in a world where countless injustices occur on a daily basis. If our anger is ungodly, we must get rid of it; if it is righteous, we must treat it righteously, resting in the Lord's sovereign promises and not bearing God's wrath ourselves.

Vengeance is God's (Rom 12:17-21) – When we trust in the Lord, we are trusting in One Who has every one of our tears in His bottle (Psalm 56:8). God is not against vengeance; He is against you taking vengeance. Every sin committed on the face of this earth will be perfectly and eternally taken care of by our heavenly Father, either in the cross or at the final judgment. Believing this, we must hand our anger over to the Lord and trust His perfect, sovereign care and timing.

Furthermore, Let Love Cover – “*Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins*” (Prov 10:12). “...*have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.*” (1 Pet 4:8). You may need to spend some time preparing for bed, more than you realized. But the fact of the matter is that, in your anger, you have far less mercy towards the little sins committed against you than the Lord has towards the infinite sins you have committed against Him (Matt 18:21-35). You don't want to be that servant in the story. And you don't want to be the one known for his hot-temper, his peppery, testy, easily provoked and ready to explode personality. That is not personality; it is sinful anger and foolishness. “*The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy*” (James 3:17).

An Opportunity for the Devil – Letting anger fester in your heart provides an opportunity for the devil. Letting anger fester in your home is like going to bed in a crime infested neighborhood with your doors left wide open. “*The moment you are controlled by your temper you are no longer able to reason...all that makes man man is gone; for the time being he is like a beast, the creature of his own passion*” – Lloyd-Jones. Paul is not exaggerating about giving the devil a foothold and neither was Jesus when He said that if you have outbursts of unrighteous anger towards your brother you have already committed murder in your heart (Matt 5:21-26). You may not be able to solve the disagreement tonight; there may be a great need to put the controversy to rest until the morning. But you may not go to bed angry or out of fellowship. Sunsets and anger are like oil and water: they do not mix.

An Opportunity for Christ – How do we resist such temptation? How do we resist the devil? “*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord*” (James 4:10). How much righteous anger has the Lord covered by the blood of His Son for our sins? “*But you have not so learned Christ*” (Eph 4:20). In Christ, we no longer have to live this way.