

Anger: The Double Bit Ax **Ephesians 4:27-27**

Introduction:

1. I think October is one of the prettiest months of the year. Don't you enjoy the vibrant colors of the changing leaves? Sharon and I have discussed what color leaves deciduous trees will have on the new earth. Will they wear their spring, summer or autumn colors? Someday we'll find out. Until then, we can enjoy this wondrous act of God our Father, the Creator.
2. October also brings cooler weather. That means that some of us have to get wood ready for the fireplace or wood stove. If you do that, you undoubtedly have an ax to split the wood or chop kindling. I have a single bit ax, which works just fine. When I was a boy, my dad had a double bit ax. I can remember him warning me, "David, be careful when you use that ax. It is a dangerous tool."
3. In the same way, the Lord has provided with a very dangerous tool as creatures made in his image. The tool is anger, and it is a double bit ax. Now since anger is dangerous, some Christians and Christian counselors assume that it is wrong and sinful. But that view is wrong. What we ought to see today from the Scriptures is that God commands a righteous anger, God forbids a sinful anger, and God warns us of the critically dangerous condition that sinful anger exposes us to.

Exposition:

- I. God commands a righteous anger. 4:26
 - A. We must understand clearly that there is a righteous anger.
 1. God has this kind of anger against the wickedness and godlessness of people. Eph 5:6; Rm 1:18
 2. Jesus displayed this kind of anger during his earthly ministry (Mk 3:5; Lk 11:42,43,44,46,47,53 [When you call for woe to fall on someone, you are angry!]; Jn 2:13-17).
 - B. Righteous anger is directed against sin.
 1. It is part of a godly worldview (Ps 119:104; Am 5:15). It is an internal motivator to oppose rebellion against God and his ways.
Quote: "In the face of blatant evil we should be indignant not tolerant, angry not apathetic. If God hates sin, his people should hate it too. If evil arouses his anger, it should arouse ours also." [Stott]
 2. It is our constant duty. The present imperative is used in our text.
 - a. A characteristic of paganism is to be morally indifferent (4:19a). "Men and women become so steeped in sin that they are not aware of the fact that they are sinning, they cannot react at all, they never feel any sense of indignation or horror; they never become angry at all; they are past feeling." [Lloyd-Jones]
 - b. You and I must not be complacent about evil. It should upset us. It should rouse us to godly action. We must see sin as a destructive cancer that consumes morality and goodness.
- II. God forbids a sinful anger. 4:26,31; cf. Gal 5:20 (fits of rage); Col 3:8
 - A. Sin is always ready to take advantage of the emotion of anger and twist it for its own evil agenda.

1. Sinful anger can be discerned by its motives. What is really producing our anger? Is it zeal for God and truth? Or is it jealousy, bitterness, frustration or a thirst for revenge? Sinful anger comes from roots of injured pride, spite, malice, and a lust to even up the score.

2. We should examine ourselves occasionally to see if we have fallen into a bad habit pattern of anger. Ask yourself, “Am I bad-tempered or irritable? Am I easily provoked (contrast Js 3:17)? Am I out of control in anyway?”

B. Anger that is not quickly resolved produces sin.

1. God’s pattern for us is to start each day with a clean emotional slate. It is dangerous to let the embers of anger to smolder. Put them out daily!

Illustration: Happily married couples learn this principle quickly!

2. Anger that is left to fester produces bitterness or malice.

Comment: Sinful anger is part of two deadly chains: Malice → Anger → Murder or...

Self-pity → Anger → Bitterness → Depression → Suicide

A wise Christian will immediately act to break these chains at their weakest links.

III. God warns us of the critically dangerous condition that sinful anger exposes us to. 4:27

A. Events are opportunities—either to serve God and help people or to serve the devil and ruin people.

Illustration: See diagram – “Opportunities for Spiritual Influence”

1. We must never forget that our struggles with sin are part of a larger spiritual war.

Illustration: During a battle, a combat soldier is probably more interested in the survival of himself and his friends than in the larger strategic plan for the war. But his success or failure is part of the whole war.

2. We must sense our duty in an event that involves our anger. God forbids us to act in a way that gives the devil a foothold. What the devil wants is a foothold in your soul so that he can spread the ruinous poisons of malice and bitterness.

Illustration: On June 6, 1944 the objective of the Allied Forces was to gain a foothold on the coast of Normandy. Once they did, the war in Europe lasted less than a year.

Apply: Do not be mistaken. If you let anger brew within you, the devil is at work in you. Years ago, a godly pastor’s wife told a woman filled with anger. “Watch out or the devil might use you!” The woman didn’t listen, and she became an instrument in destroying several friendships. Eventually, her marriage ended in divorce. So I warn you, if you play with anger, you are dancing with the devil.

B. Climbing out of this dangerous situation. See chart – “Tracing Your Problems to Solutions”

1. The “Problem Situation” – basic facts of the event. Sometimes if a person has recurring troubles with a sin like anger, there may be common “triggers” such as time or place.

Illustration: There was a man who became angry at tollbooths. He had to learn to see the occasion as a ministry opportunity.

2. “Your Experience” – specific acts, emotions and thoughts that you did or had during the event. If you want to be helped, honesty is essential. We must speak the truth about ourselves.

3. “Ruling Motives” – the deep, inner influences in your heart.

4. “Solution Situation” – telling yourself the truth from God’s word. As the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit change your motives, your thoughts, emotions and choices will change, and then you will see yourself change in the event.

Conclusion:

1. Events will happen that will provoke you to anger, either of a godly or sinful kind. Now is the time to determine to bring God’s truth to your heart so that it will influence you during those times. Self-control is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. A wise person will seek his help now.

2. When you have a holy anger, remember to resolve the situation quickly, either by your personal action where possible or by prayer where you cannot solve the problem. Anger is such a dangerous ax that we must not take swings with it when we are tired. Start each day fresh.

3. Perhaps God wants you to get angry at someone’s sins—yours! Take God’s side against your sins and repent. Have a change of mind about your sins and trust Christ for forgiveness.