

The New Way of Walking: Be Angry and Do Not Sin

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[0:00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Now, anger is essentially a response, a reaction. You see something, you don't like it, you feel offended perhaps, and you get angry.

[2:13] It's an intense response. To be human is to get angry. In order to make that point, let's have a show of hands.

Have you been angry in the last three months? Raise your hand. I knew it. How about last three weeks? Early September. Yep, amen, me too.

Last three days? Yes, I have. Close your eyes now. Last three hours? Just kidding. Just kidding. Just kidding. We get angry, don't we?

We get angry. Now, you may be surprised. God does not forbid anger in the Bible. God Himself is angry.

I'm going to show you that in just a little bit. But He calls us as Christians to a certain kind of anger. As Christians, who we are in Christ determines how we deal with our anger.

[3:20] And so if you would now open up your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4, verses 26 and 27. I'm going to read those two verses. Listen now, this is God's Word.

Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil.

Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil. The anger of our former manner of life before we became Christians was a destructive kind of anger.

It was not useful. But now as new creations in Christ, our anger is to be constructive. It's to be useful.

It's to be redemptive. It's to be Christ-like in true righteousness and holiness. So here's what we need to see this morning.

[4:25] God is calling us simply to be Christ-like in our anger. He's calling you and me to be like Jesus. And what we get angry about and how we express our anger.

So God is not forbidding anger here. What He is doing though is He's calling us to a Christ-like anger. Which will mean putting off the anger of our former way of living.

Our selfish anger. Reminding ourselves of who we are in Christ. And then putting on our new self with Christ-like anger.

So all throughout Ephesians 4, we've seen that we're getting this new wardrobe of clothes. Last week we talked about putting off falsehood. Putting on truth. This morning we're talking about putting off a certain kind of anger.

And putting on a Christ-like anger. And so to help you see that this morning, we're going to kind of bear down on these two verses. The first thing that we need to be sure of is this.

[5:27] We need to be sure about our relationship to God's anger. So we've got to be clear on that. The second thing that we need to be clear on is this. We need to be angry and suspicious of our anger at the same time.

And then the last thing that we need to see is this. We need to be sanctifying our anger. We need to be stabilizing our anger. We need to be controlling our anger.

So we'll see this come out as we walk our way through this passage. We're to be Christ-like in our anger. And so, let's be sure about our standing in relationship to God's anger.

Now there's two things you need to know about God's anger. First one is this. God is angry. He is. Now, it's not that uncommon to hear someone make a statement like this.

The God of the Old Testament is a God of anger and the God of the New Testament is a God of love. Has anybody heard anything like that before? It's just not true.

[6:35] Because the God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. Same God. In both Testaments, God reveals Himself as a God of just anger and steadfast love.

Now, one of the greatest references that echoes through the pages of the Old Testament about God's anger is found in Exodus 34.

Now, let me tell you what's going on here. God has just delivered His people out of Egypt, brought them to Mount Sinai. He brought Moses up onto Mount Sinai and with His very finger wrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets.

They're talking. God makes aware of something. There's something off with my people right now.

Moses, go down there. Moses goes down the mountain. And what does he see? His people, God's people, are worshipping a golden calf.

Moses throws down the tablets. And then God wants to wipe His people out. He'll start from scratch. Moses intercedes. No, God, no.

[7:40] That won't look good. God relents. And then He calls Moses back up on the mountain. And He cuts out two new tablets. He's going to renew His covenant with His people.

Our God is amazing. But before He does that, He says something about Himself. Exodus chapter 34. Verses 5 through 8. Listen to what God says.

The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with Moses there and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before Him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation.

And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. The God of the Old Testament is a God of just anger.

He's slow to anger. He's slow to anger. And full of steadfast love and faithfulness. He's a God merciful and gracious. Do you know what makes God really angry?

[9:02] Do you know? When the people He has created in His image, to worship Him, reject Him, in order to worship something other than Him.

That's what makes God really angry. It's called idolatry. And in God's economy of things, that is a capital offense. Now think about this.

God knows everything. The fancy word is, He's omniscient. He knows that which is of greatest value and worthy of highest praise.

It's Himself. He knows that the best thing for us is to be in a relationship with Him.

Giving Him the praise, do His name, living for Him. I mean, that's what He made us for. To be in right relationship with Him. To delight in Him. To enjoy Him.

[10:08] But in our sin, we've rejected Him and settling to worship junk. Now you might be thinking, you know, that idolatry stuff, that was a big problem in the Old Testament.

It's not an Old Testament problem alone. It is a worship problem. It is a human problem.

It's a sin problem. We all deal with it. Our nature, apart from Christ, is dead to God. And in our spiritual deadness, we seek to worship things not God.

Namely, ourselves. Have you ever heard of the expression, look out for number one? You heard that before? Think of it as a worship refrain.

I'm living for myself. You see, even though we are futile in our thinking, darkened in our understanding.

[11:16] Now this is before we became Christians. We are futile in our thinking, darkened in our understanding. We are ignorant. We are

alienated from the life of God. Our hearts were hardened to Him. All that was true.

Do you know what else was true? We were worshipers. And since we did not worship God, we worshiped something else, and it provoked His anger.

And so in Ephesians 2, 1 through 3, we read something like this. I'll just summarize it. We were dead to God. We were deceived. We were disobedient.

We were bedeviled following the prince of the power of the air. And as a result, we were damned. We were children of wrath. Under God's just wrath.

And what provoked it was our idolatry. Our exchange of the Creator for the created things in our worship. Our hearts were hardened to Him. And what Romans 2, 5 says is that it stores up God's wrath against us.

[12:23] You know what's hard to think about? People are under God's wrath right now. We've got a beautiful day. And people are under God's wrath right now.

There are people sleeping in apartments and homes all around this place, many of whom are under God's wrath right now. We're going to be watching the football game later this afternoon. How many people are going to be watching?

How many under God's wrath? We like to think of John 3, 16. For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

But just 20 verses later, we read this. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on Him.

The Bible is very clear. If you've not put your trust in Jesus, God's wrath is hanging over your head. You're in danger.

[13:36] You're in danger. And God's wrath is a just wrath. It's a right response to idolatry. Your idolatry. You swapping Him out to worship something else.

God is right in His wrath. Now for those of us who are Christians, that's who we used to be. It's not true anymore.

But if you're not a Christian, you need to flee to Jesus because He will rescue you from the just wrath hanging over your head.

He will bear it for you. And so the first thing I wanted you to be sure of is God is angry. Even right now. The second thing I want to remind you of as a Christian is this.

He's not angry with you anymore. He's not. You can be sure that the wrath of God in all its fullness was poured out on Christ.

[14:36] If you haven't made Romans 8.1 a verse to set in your heart, you must. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

No more wrath. No more danger. No more fear of judgment. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

There was a time when God's wrath was over us but no more. We believed in the Son. We have eternal life. It no longer remains over us.

So now the question is where did the wrath go? Where did it go? If it's not on us, where did it go? Did God sweep it under the rug?

Is God a passive-aggressive God? He just kind of packs it down for a little bit only for an explosion of rage later on?

[15:40] Do we have to be afraid of our God? Do we have to walk in eggshells around Him? No, no, no, no, no. Though God was just in His wrath towards us, He dealt with His anger in a just and loving way for us.

Here's the Gospel. God made peace with us through the cross of Jesus Christ. God poured out all of His wrath on the head of Jesus.

All of it for me on Christ. The death that Christ died, He died for you, Christian. Fully satisfying the just wrath of God.

So we can say, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. There is no more wrath to be poured out. It's been all poured out on Jesus for you.

No more wrath. Nothing's hanging now. Nothing's hanging over your head. In the cross of Christ, we see God's just wrath and steadfast love on full display.

[16:52] It's a glorious place. It's wonderful. Can I just tell you one more thing too? We don't have to fear God's wrath against us.

God's wrath is now for us. At the end of time, when Jesus comes back, He's going to make all things right. He's going to judge everything.

We have nothing to fear. His wrath is for us. In Ephesians 2, 1 through 3, we were under God's wrath. We were damned. And at the end of Ephesians 2, in 2.10, we're His workmanship.

We're His delight. And the difference is Jesus. God's grace to us. We've got to be sure of our standing in relationship to God's anger.

And sure of that, now let's turn to our own anger. In Ephesians 4, verses 26 and 27, there is actually four commands.

[18:04] The first one is to be angry. Be angry. God is not forbidding anger.

He's actually commanding it. He's calling us to be angry. Now, let me just clarify something quickly. He's not commanding us to be sinful in our anger.

He is commanding us to be Christ-like in our anger. Remember verses 22 through 24 that just preceded this passage.

We're being called to put off the selfish way of living of our former manner of life with its anger. To be renewed in our mind that we belong to Christ.

That God's wrath has been paid out in full on Him. We're no longer under God's wrath now. And so now, knowing who we are in Christ, we are to put on a new kind of anger.

[19:06] A Christ-like anger. So this command here, to be angry, is to be angry in a way that's like Jesus. And there is a way.

God is saying to us, you is mine, you is alive, you is holy, and you is to be angry the way Jesus gets angry. So we need to realize that we're being called to be angry about the right things here.

But we also need to realize we've got to be suspicious of our anger. We've got to be suspicious of it. And there's two reasons why we've got to be suspicious of our anger. The first reason is our anger, even in Christ, is unstable.

It's an unstable anger. The Bible describes the experience of a Christian as having a war within them. Galatians 5, 16 and 17, the desires of the flesh are opposed to the desires of the Spirit.

This is happening inside of us. James 4, 1. James says, hey, why are there quarrels and fights within you? Is it not because of the passions that war inside of you?

[20:17] We have a mixed bag when it comes to our motives. Why we do what we do. And so, because of sin in our hearts, even though we're new creations, we've got to be suspicious of our anger.

We've got to be careful from where it comes from. And so, when James, in James 1, 19 and 20, says, be slow to anger. For the anger of man cannot accomplish the righteousness of God. He's being extremely wise. He's not forbidding it. He's saying, whoa, be careful. So, anger is unstable.

That's the first reason why we need to be suspicious. The second reason why we need to be suspicious is anger's impact. It can be devastating.

Do you know what nuclear fission is? I study nuclear fission on the side. I study nuclear fission on the side. In my free time. Actually, nuclear fission is the splitting of one atom into two.

[21:24] And when that fission takes place, there is a massive release of energy. Massive. Anger is a reaction that releases a huge amount of energy, isn't it?

We all can relate with that. Anger can either be destructive or constructive. Anger can either devastate or be useful.

Anger can actually be redemptive. There are two kinds of angers. There's unrighteous, ungodly anger. And then there's righteous Christ-like anger.

Does the name Little Boy ring a bell? Little Boy was the name of the first atomic bomb that was detonated over Hiroshima at the end of World War II.

It was detonated actually above the city. And the detonation was the splitting of an atom. I think it was a uranium-235 atom.

[22:27] It split and there was immense chain reaction and it released a huge amount of energy and it completely devastated that city. I'm not sure if you've seen pictures of Hiroshima after that bomb was dropped.

It was raised. Flattened, charred. Many died. Devastating. Anger is a reaction that can bring about bomb-like devastation to relationships.

Devastating friendships. Devastating marriages. Devastating families. Devastating workplaces. Devastating churches.

We've got to be suspicious of it. Devastating. This sinful kind of anger is much more devil-like than it is Christ-like. It destroys.

It brings hostility. It doesn't unite. It doesn't bring about peace. Last week, we read the command to put off falsehood and speak the truth with his neighbor.

[23:46] We can't spin our sinful anger. anger. We can't be untruthful about our anger. We've got to be honest about it.

Honest before God about it. We must confess it to one another in order to put it off. We've got to be suspicious of it. It's unstable.

It's devastating. But not all nuclear fission devastates. Nuclear fission is what takes place in nuclear reactors that produce all sorts of electricity so that we can read our Bibles in the morning.

It's useful. It's productive. It's still dangerous. Fission reactions still need to be stabilized, but it's useful.

So God in Christ is seeking to do something in us with regard to our anger. He's seeking to purge out the old stuff that's destructive and to radically change us and transform us to get angry about the right stuff for redemptive, useful purposes.

[24:56] And God is really interested in doing that for the advancement of His glory and for the good of other people and it's starting with you. It's starting with me.

If you're a Christian, God made you new in Christ so that you wouldn't be enslaved by your sinful anger, but you'd be able to use your anger for good.

It's Christ-like. Did you know that Jesus got angry? Let me just point you to two places really quick. In Mark chapter 3, Jesus walks into a synagogue and there was a man with a withered hand in the synagogue and what was taking place when Jesus was teaching was this.

He was healing people and He was healing people on the Sabbath and there were teachers of the law that were saying this. You can't do that, Jesus. That's a work.

You're not allowed to work on the Sabbath. So Jesus walks into this synagogue. He sees the man with a withered hand. It was a total setup. Total setup. And Jesus looks at him and He looks at the people there watching Him to see what He's going to do and He says, is it not lawful?

[26:09] Is it not lawful to heal on the Sabbath? And He waits and they remain silent. And what the Scriptures say is Jesus looking around in anger, grieved over the hardness of hearts, be healed.

Jesus healed the guy and Jesus was angry. We see a redemptive use of His anger. He was angry at people using God's Word, twisting it in order to keep loving the neighbor.

Remember, Luke 19, Jesus walks into Jerusalem. He walks into the temple and He sees all these people selling goods in the temple.

Remember what Jesus did? He clears it. Throws over tables. He runs people out. And He said, you can't make this house of prayer a den of robbers.

They were using God's place of worship to make money for greed. It made Jesus mad. We see in these examples, examples.

[27:26] Jesus is wanting God worshipped. He's wanting good for others. What do you get angry about? What makes you mad?

What provokes you to an anger reaction? Is it about you? Are you afraid? Out of control? Plans change?

You've been hurt? Stressed out? Misunderstood? Disrespected? Disappointed? You've been denied a right? You've been passed over? You get angry? Someone tells you you don't want to hear something. You get mad. What is it that you wanted that you weren't getting that made you angry?

Is it about you? Or is your anger about God's glory and the good of others? Do you get angry about abortion? Do you get angry about pornography?

Do you get angry about the payday loans on the corner of 22nd and 60th? Do you get angry about these things? Do you get angry about your own sin? About your own lust?

[28:32] About your own greed? About your own laziness? About your own pride and self-righteousness? About your own self-worship? Do you get angry about that? We've got to be suspicious of our anger.

We've got to be suspicious of where it comes from. A great question to start asking yourself is why am I angry? What is it that I want that I'm not getting?

Are you angry at the right things? Now, a Christ-like anger is a sanctified anger. A Christ-like anger is a stabilized anger.

It's a controlled anger. And to that point, we now turn. We've looked at God's anger. We've looked at our own anger. We've got to be suspicious of it.

And now, let's look at how to be angry in a way that pleases Jesus. We need to control our anger. In Ephesians 4, 26 and 27, there are four commands.

[29:41] The first one is be angry. And then there are three negative commands. They are, be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. And do not give the devil an opportunity.

These three commands, these last three commands, are designed to help us direct our anger. Help us to control our anger.

Help us to stabilize it, to sanctify it. If anger is like kindling a fire, what we're called to is control the burn.

We've got to control the burning of our anger. My folks live west of Chicago. And so when we drive out there, we drive through a lot of prairie land. And in the spring and early summer, what you'll notice are big swaths of this prairie that are just charred black.

And what happens is the Illinois DNR, Department of Natural Resources, they send out groups of people to do controlled burns on the prairie. It's preventative. It protects against a devastating wildfire.

[30:53] And it's healthy. It manages the prairie. It's good. If anger is like kindling a fire, we must learn how to control our anger.

We must learn how to control the burn. And so let's look at these three negative commands and benefit from learning how to control anger which can burn inside of us.

The first is this. Be angry and do not sin. Aim your anger. Aim it.

Aim it. The word translated aim, or excuse me, sin, literally means to miss the mark.

It was used of spear throwing. When someone would throw a spear at a target and miss, they would sin. Do you remember King Saul? David playing his harp.

[31:51] Saul is angry, picks up his spear and tries to pin David to the wall. He missed. He sinned. In more ways than one. We must aim our anger at the right target.

And for that, we've got to renew our minds. We've got to remember what God values. We've got to remember who we are. We've got to aim our anger at the glory of God and the good of others.

Now, I am not saying be angry at the glory of God. Be angry at the good of others. We leverage our anger for the glory of God.

For the good of others. If I am getting angry because I'm ashamed or embarrassed or I'm jealous of someone else, that's missing the mark. I've got to aim my anger in a way that pleases Jesus.

Am I angry at the right thing? And I'm exercising my anger in the right way. One of the tremendous tools in our fight here is this.

[33:01] Pray. Pray. When you feel the heat coming on, when you feel your anger kindling, pray. Turn to God in prayer. Say, God, is this anger rising in me pleasing to you?

Or do I just need to put this off right now? God, is there a way that this anger can be used for your purposes? We pray. We pray. It helps control the burn.

We've got to make sure we're getting our angry, aiming it at the right thing. One of the results will come is this. We're going to be slow to anger.

We're going to slow it down. We're not going to rush into something. If you are quick to anger, if you jump to conclusions, if you impute motives very quickly, if people walk on eggshells around you because you're volatile, you know what?

You need to confess your anger. You need to go to the Lord and confess your anger to Him. Ask Him to change you. Make you more like Jesus.

[34:08] Don't spin it. Be honest about it. Keep it real. Be truthful. Ask other people to help you. That's how we repent. That's how we turn.

And we turn to Jesus. Jesus changed me. So we've got to aim our anger and then we've got to be quick to resolve our anger.

We're to be slow to anger but we're to be quick to resolve it. Don't let the sun go down on your anger. Paul is saying is don't fuel your anger.

As time goes by don't be fueling your anger. Be cooling your anger. Be resolving it.

Be confessing it. Get it right with other people before the sun sets. It's a great rule of thumb. Don't go to bed until you've sought peace with others. Which that means is confessing your sin to others.

[35:08] Maybe you're not sure if my anger is sinful. That's okay. Confess it. Hey, I'm angry. Help me. You should see my kitchen sometimes. I walk into our kitchen and I'm frustrated which is a code word for angry.

And I walk in and something doesn't go right. And I'm like, Jenny, I'm just like You know what my wife does? Tells me to go for a walk. Cool down. Slow it down.

Slow to anger. I confess it to her and she helps me. And if I need somebody to confess to, I'm able to. Slow it down. Be quick to peace.

The goal here is that we're moving to peace together. We're controlling the burn together. We can't let unresolved anger burn like a fire and sweep through our marriages and our families and our workplaces and our church.

We can't do that. We've got to be quick to resolving our anger. Now the third way that we control the burn is found in verse 27 as well.

[36:19] Don't give the devil an opportunity. We're to aim our anger.

We're to be quick in resolving our anger. And we're to be sober of our enemy.

There is no question that the Bible clearly teaches that there is a devil Satan who opposes us.

He is a destroyer a deceiver a divider and what we need to realize is that he is doomed. His day is set. He's going to be thrown into the lake of fire.

He knows that and therefore he rages all the more. brothers and sisters our God is sovereign over everything including the devil.

And he has put us in a spiritual street fight. It's real. The prince of the power of the year who we used to follow is now our enemy and he's ticked off.

[37:20] And no he is a schemer. I just got done reading a book on World War II trench warfare. And one of the things that both sides both armies would do is they would set up snipers and they would be looking for people who are passing gaps in the trenches to snipe.

People raising their heads to snipe. The devil is sniping us. He's looking for opportunities that our anger can open up to take advantage of us.

To injure us. To disunite us. We belong to God. He is for us. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

I would rather deal with Satan being angry with me than God being angry with me. Do I have an amen? And God has done that for us in Christ.

We're going to learn in Ephesians 6 how we will resist him. How we fight. What I want you to see here is this. Our church unity and health depends on how we deal with anger.

[38:30] Your marital unity and health depends upon how you deal with anger. Your familial unity and health really does depend on how you deal with anger.

We've got to put off the old stuff. Renew our minds and who we are and put on Christ-like anger.

We've got to be slow to it. We've got to be suspicious of it. We've got to aim it.

We've got to be quick to peace and be sober of our enemy. Let me pray for us. God in heaven thank you so much that you poured out your anger that was meant for us onto Christ.

We do not fear your anger anymore but God we rejoice in knowing that your anger is actually for us. we pray too that God you would rid us of sinful anger that is destructive and God transform us into Christ's image that we may use our anger for good.

God protect our church. I pray spirit of God that you would convict we ask that God there would be humble conversations this afternoon confessing of sinful anger and the giving of forgiveness.

[39:47] God would you bring peace to all aspects of our life together as a church. God we are aware of the devil and his schemes.

God we ask you to protect us in Jesus name Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.