

Two Short Verses About a Big Problem

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Ephesians chapter 4, again reading in verse 26.! Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil. This is the word of the Lord.

Thank you to God. Well, I want to do something I've never done before this morning. I want to begin by reading an entire chapter of a book I'm reading.

It's called Good and Angry by David Pallison. So by way of introduction, I want to read this chapter to you. So I hope you are comfortable in our chairs that we selected for you.

[1 : 10] And let's listen to what Dr. Pallison says. So this is chapter 2 of his book, Good and Angry, Redeeming Anger, Irritation, Complaining, and Bitterness.

Chapter 2. He says, Do you have a serious problem with anger? Yes.

That's the whole chapter. Because that's all you need to know about that question. Do you have a serious problem with anger?

Anger, yes. Anger is one of the most common human emotion. We've all been angry. It's why we laugh so hard at the mean-spirited, gunslinging outlaw Yosemite Sam chasing down the ever-elusive Bugs Bunny.

It's why we convulse with laughter at Clark Griswold when he loses it again. When the Christmas bonus does not arrive in the way he had planned.

[2 : 17] It's why we howl at the rage monster who destroys everything in sight. The experience of watching someone lose it is hilarious.

Because we've all been there. We've all been angry. We've all lost it. Dr. Pallison says in his book, The shoes of anger are like a pair of open-heeled slippers.

One size really does fit all. But anger is not just when we explode. Anger disturbs us in the everyday irritations of life.

Someone talks too long to the cashier in front of you, and you can have a little bit of irritation.

Someone drives 10 miles below the speed limit in the left lane.

Somebody's pointing fingers out here. The doctor's office puts you on hold for 15 minutes and then hangs up because they forgot you were even there. Anger gnaws at us in different seasons of life.

[3 : 23] We have a hard time moving on from anger. Beneath the far too often plastic smiles and small talk, we simmer. We're frustrated by all the dreams that have died.

We brood over conflicts in the past, over things that have been done to us. We seethe with exasperation at some people around us.

We don't have time for them anymore. We don't have time for their kind anymore. At times, anger overtakes us. We've seen it. We lose it. We blurt out obscenities.

We shout harsh, biting words. It can happen in a moment when you bang your head on a shelf that you didn't see or didn't realize. Or it may happen gradually in the reckless unloading of stored up slights and snubs that you feel like you can't hold back anymore.

Do you have a problem with anger? A serious problem? Yes. I do too. But the seriousness of anger is not primarily what it does to us, but what you do to others when you're angry.

[4 : 31] Ed Welch says, to be angry is to destroy. Anger splits friendships and marriages. Anger splits churches.

That's the reason the Apostle Paul, when he's exhorting this church in Ephesus, the reason he gives two verses to anger is because it splits churches so fast. You've seen it happen in this

community.

You've probably seen it in your life. Anger splits churches. How can we maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace with friends when we're angry? How can we live in peace if we keep returning to the cesspool of bitterness and resentment?

We're different now. That's what the Apostle is saying. We're different now. We've been made new. We've been raised with Christ. We've been set free to serve God.

Set free from dead works to serve the living God. He's saying there's a new way to live. This dead-end path of anger is not the way the Lord wants you to live.

[5 : 33] In a world where we're going is, let not your anger tear down the body God has built together in Christ. Let not your anger tear down the body God has built together in Christ.

The first point is, anger is sometimes right. Anger is sometimes right. As Taylor explained last week, these verses hit us hard.

Rapid fire. You know, the Apostle Paul has been unfolding the wonderful works of God in many jam-packed, run-on sentences. But now he starts delivering short, direct sentences that are filled with commands.

Whereas so much of Ephesians thus far is all about what God has done for us in Christ, now Paul turns and points the fingers, so to speak, and the commands at us. He rattles off 14 commands in verses 4, 25 through 5, 2.

About how we're to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called. You know what the Christian life looks like? This is where you find it. In these commands. How we're to live. Taylor covered last week.

[6 : 39] We're to speak truth. Now he says four separate commands. Rapid fire about anger. But he introduces anger in a surprising way.

Look back there in verse 26. Be angry. Wait, wait, wait. Are we really being commanded to be angry? Now some people say, the Apostle's saying, you know, you suppress your anger as long as possible, and then, you know, if it lets out, then just try not to sin in it.

Or some people say it's more like conditional. If you get angry, make sure you don't sin. So you may be able to make it through without getting angry, but if you do, make sure you don't sin.

But the best way to understand this is a positive command. Be angry. It's not always wrong to be angry. It's sometimes right. It's sometimes good.

To put it another way, in and of itself, anger is not sinful. After all, God gets angry. We see that in the Old Testament.

[7 : 44] That's one thing you can read, and we see it in the New Testament too, by the way. But sometimes you can read the Old Testament, and you see God's anger. You think, what is going on? Is God out of control? I'm reading Numbers this week, and after delivering the people of Israel through the Red Sea, burying all their enemies in the Red Sea, and waiting on them hand and foot as they wander through the wilderness, they begin to complain.

If there's ever a verse in the Bible I can relate to, application's easy. It's right there. When the Lord hears it, He doesn't smile or chuckle.

His anger is kindled. The text says, now what's that all about? Is the living God a grumpy old man? No. No. The living God is an extensively generous God who is rightly angered at the open rebellion of His creatures, saying, that's not enough.

For the God who made all these things that is righteous and just and holy, it would be unholy if He was not angry at sin.

In fact, the wonderful news that we celebrate in the gospel is not merely the love of God displayed, but the wrath and anger of God satisfied through Jesus Christ.

[9 : 10] Several years ago, the PCUSA was making a new hymnal, and they wanted to include in Christ alone the most significant modern hymn in the past 50 years probably.

And you know that hymn. We've sung it a lot here. You probably sing it by heart. It says, till on that cross, as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied. For every sin on Him was laid, and here in the death of Christ I live.

They wanted to include that ten, but they wanted to change one line. Instead of saying the wrath of God was satisfied, they wanted to say the love of God was magnified.

And Keith and Kristen Getty rejected it. Why? Because at the heart of the gospel is the anger of God being satisfied by the love of God through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ.

That's what I offer you this day and always, the good news of the sacrifice of Jesus. You don't flee the wrath to come. Come to this one.

[10:12] God gets angry. Jesus gets angry as well. We saw that when we went through Mark several years ago when he's in the synagogue on the Sabbath. And these men are more focused on their rules than they are helping a man with a withered hand.

Jesus gets angry. Sometimes we translate indignant. Just because that's a word we don't think is associated with anger. But he's angry. He's ticked off, so to speak.

Why? At these hypocrites who are posers, who fake religion. So it's sometimes right to be angry. Sometimes good to be angry.

Anger at its core is just, I don't like that. I think that's wrong. David Pallison in this book. By the way, this is the most significant book I've ever read on anger.

So if you want a book on anger, and you all have a serious problem, we already established that. You might want to get a book to work on it. At its core, anger is very simple.

[11:16] It expresses, I'm against that. The underlying DNA of anger is the negative evaluation. Active displeasure towards something that's important enough to care about.

You see that? I'm against that. What is the underlying DNA? Negative evaluation. The active displeasure towards something that's important enough to care about. When anger is active displeasure towards something that's truly important, our anger can be good.

It can be right. What is the Apostle Paul, when he's saying be angry, what do you think he has in mind? I think he's saying you should not be indifferent when members of the church go back to worshipping the God of Artemis.

That's what the city was known for. You should not be unconcerned when brothers continue in the church. You should not pay no mind when sisters bite and devour one another in the local body, in the church.

You should be angry. You should not be indifferent. What does God want us to be angry about? You know, it's right to be angry when you hear false teaching and false doctrine.

[12:36] There's a message being taught right now throughout the world. Believe in Jesus and he will make you healthy and wealthy. But it's not the gospel. And it's sending millions of people to hell. It's a very serious matter.

There's a message being more taught in the western countries. That believe in Jesus and he will make you happy and fulfilled. It's not the gospel either. It's confusing and disillusions people.

Jesus promises eternity in heaven. But he calls us to carry a cross on earth. So any gospel that doesn't include the cross is not the Christian gospel.

There should be something in you that stiffens up when you hear things like that. Says that's not right. That's not what Christ proclaimed. You should be angry when you encounter attacks on the character and dignity of other people.

When you hear someone being slandered. When you hear someone being maligned for their race or body size or background. When you see someone or hear someone being mistreated or abused.

[13:40] Yeah I think good anger like this is not an emotion I often experience because of my own sin. But I remember when my mother-in-law was battling Alzheimer's. Dying of Alzheimer's.

She had come to a point where she had lost the control of all her faculties. So unable to bathe herself. Unable to change herself. Unable to feed herself.

Unable to clothe herself. Unable to use the restroom by herself. I remember she was getting sick. Because she was not being changed quickly after using the restroom.

And I was angry. Not blurting out ungodly things. She said you will change her. Do you understand? Because she's made in the image of God. You will not play fast and loose with an image bearer.

There's something that's so right about that.

[14:43] I was offended. Here's my point. If there's no anger in your Christianity. If there's nothing that stiffens your back. Nothing that offends you. Nothing that grieves you. Nothing that burdens you. You may not be a Christian.

You don't stand for anything. Why did Christ get angry? Now obviously Christ is.

He is fully God. So he's displaying the character of God. But he's also fully man. And what that means is Christ is a fully mature moral man.

He is. One theologian says. Man fully alive. He is the way man is supposed to be. We are being created in his image. One comment. Or one really important theologian from the last century.

Named B.B. Warfield. He wrote a really fascinating book called. The Emotional Life of Our Lord. It's a little heavy. But it's amazing. What is the emotional life of our Lord?

[15 : 48] And he talks about what's going on in Jesus' anger. And he says. I have this quote. We'll take our time on it. But I think it's very helpful. He says. It would be impossible.

Now this is commenting. After he's commented on Jesus' anger. He says. It would be impossible for a moral being. To stand in the presence of perceived wrong. Indifferent and unmoved.

Precisely what we mean by a moral being. Is it being perceptive of the difference between right and wrong. And reacting appropriately to right and wrong perceived as such.

What he's saying is. Jesus could not stand in the presence of right and wrong. Without being emotionally affected. So in the presence of right.

When Mary Magdalene comes and breaks that alabaster jar at his feet. And some of the disciples are like. What's going on? She's wasting money. Jesus says. This is a tremendous sacrifice.

[16 : 48] But when he stands in the presence of the synagogue. Of those who are just playing games with the religion. He's emotionally offended. What's that mean? What's going on here? We're supposed to be emotionally affected.

We're transformed. There should be an emotional visceral response. To that which offends God. Is it not the greatest tragedy of our day.

That we're not offended most. By the things that offend God. That we're not grieved as we should be. By the evils of abortion. Not offended as we should be. By the assaults on human nature.

And sexuality as we should be. Is it not a great tragedy to hit closer to home. That we're not offended by hypocrisy. By those who profess to love Jesus.

But do not give. Don't sacrifice. Those who profess to follow him. And maintain a hidden life of pornography. Be angry. That's what he's saying. Be offended. Don't let your Christianity slide into a mesh.

[17 : 52] Of vague generalities. And comfortable truths. That's not what Christianity is. Christianity has a few barbs in it. If you can swallow it whole without it stinging.

Then you don't have Christianity. Anger is sometimes right. Point two. Anger is often wrong.

Anger is often wrong. Anger is sometimes right. It's often wrong. Anger in the hands of sinners is a knife's edge. It's holding lit dynamite.

That's why he immediately says. Be angry. Immediately includes the command. Do not sin. This verse is a direct quotation of Psalm 4.

In the Psalm. David is in trouble. He's surrounded by people. They're dishonoring God. They're slandering. He's the king. And they're slandering him. They're tearing down God's anointed.

[18 : 53] It's a big thing. But he's telling us something here. That distress and trouble often open wide a snare for anger and bitterness. You know we give in to discontentment and frustration in trouble.

We take note of every wrong. Replay it again and again. And so he said. Be angry. Do not sin. Paul adds. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

What he's saying is that anger often brings about a pit that you fall into. And how many days have we spent in the pit of bitterness and anger? Too many.

Anger is often wrong because it focuses on yourself. You know it's one thing to say I'm against that. I don't like. I'm against eggplant. You know. I'm against kale. No I'm just kidding.

I actually like kale okay. But I like to mock it. You know. I'm against lots of the bloated vegetables. It's just nasty to my taste. It's a texture thing. So it's the way the Lord made me.

[19 : 54] But it's wrong to say. I don't like that. I want something else. I need something else. I must have something else.

You shall not do that in my presence. The idea is. It's wrong when anger escalates from a desire to a demand to a need to an expectation to conflict.

He's alerting us that anger begins in the heart and it often goes wrong there. That's why James says you desire and do not have so you murder.

That's why Jesus says. You know. You've heard it said. Do not murder. Well I tell you anyone who's angry at his brother in his heart has committed murder in his heart. Why? Because that same escalation is going on.

It happens so quickly. What's going on in and of this kind of this escalation of our wants, of our craving is an ignoring of God.

[20 : 57] A rejecting of him. We're redefining. You know. Anger is all about value. It's all about rightness. You know. It's all about what's right. Well what's happening is. And we don't even notice. You're changing out.

You're defining what's right now. You're rejecting God's command. So often anger is the ends justify the means. I must blow up because this was so wrong. Well that's not true biblically.

You must not blow up. But it happens so quickly. We take matters into our hands. Anger so often we think about it.

It's something that's done to us. But it's something we do. That's what the apostle is telling us. It's something that takes hold of us.

Anger can often go wrong in loud, brash, violent ways. I don't know how many holes have been punched into walls in my house.

[21 : 56] Not my current one because I've only lived there six years. But there's one in my home where I grew up. I remember one time I was living with a bunch of guys.

I always picked like 12 guys to live with in college. What you just knew was destined for trouble. And I was biting my own important matters of getting ready for exams.

I was in my senior year taking 18 hours. Hold the applause. And I was preparing. I had an exam on Saturday morning.

And so Friday night wanted to go to bed early. And not all of my roommates were as studious as I was. And a couple of them got together and decided to do a little prank on me.

So they made, I think, some wet tulip paper. Filled it with a couple pounds of flour. Came into my room while I was sound asleep.

[22 : 59] One came over to the bed with the flower bomb is what it was. One got to the light switch.

And one stood at the foot of my bed with a disposable camera. So one turned on the light. And I don't know why I did this. But I shot up in bed. Boom! The flower bomb nails me in the face.

The other one turns out the light. I fall back. Well, we get the picture snapped. I fall back into bed. Wake up. Like I, you know, took a bath in sand or something like that.

Like, what in the world is going on? And I was enraged. Yeah, I ran. I knew who was doing this. You know, it was wonderful.

The guy that got the pictures already left to the CVS. You know, to get the hour picture developing. But the rest of them, I hunted them down.

[23 : 55] And, you know, I threw their bedding into the middle of the street with all the rain. And I went to bed. I was so angry that I couldn't sleep. And I thought I was right. I don't know how right they were.

But I was not right. I was angry. I thought I was righteous. That's what anger does. It deceives you. It comes out in loud, violent ways of sarcasm, self-righteous laughs, arguing, slander, punching things, throwing things.

But it can come out in quiet ways, too. Sighs and snickers. Early in our marriage, we used to call it a self-righteous laugh.

There's a loud anger and there's a quiet anger. You know, self-pity, sullenness, and pouting is a common way anger goes wrong. When I feel slighted.

When we feel slighted or mistreated or wounded, we say, this is not right. Why did they do that to me? Why did this happen to me? I don't deserve this.

[25 : 05] And we pout. We sulk. We withdraw our affections from our friends and family. We make ourselves scarce. We try to make them see what they've done.

Make them pay. We lock ourselves in a prison of our own making. But the goal of that anger is the same. It's payback.

Revenge. The Bible says, beloved, never avenge yourself. Leave it to the wrath of God. It's a form of blackmail. It's going on all over our culture. Emotional blackmail. You hurt me and therefore I can burn your house down.

I mean, that's essentially what's going on in our culture. I can attack you even though you don't know what you did. I know what you did. I know what I felt. And it's particularly common among men.

I feel like men that get older, they often turn from this loud, brute anger to quiet, sulking, pouting anger. John Piper helps us.

[26 : 06] He imagines, what if I preach this sermon, make war on pouting? Quite the anthem. He continues, make war on pouting, guys.

I mean, we come home and our wives don't welcome us with the way we hope they would. Or they don't want to go where we want to go tonight. Or they don't do sex the way we hope they would do sex.

Or they don't fix our favorite food. Or they criticize us when we got enough criticism at work today. And we just slink off to the den with our shoulders bent low, licking our wounds and saying, poor me like a little puppy.

That is just stupid, evil, wicked, unmanly, unspiritual behavior. I mean, is that the way we think about pouting? Stupid, wicked, evil, unmanly, unspiritual behavior.

Make war on pouting. I mean, I know this is, I mean, I attack this stuff. Because that's what I know is going on when I start pouting, slinking away, saying, I don't deserve to be treated like this.

[27 : 09] You know, I'm at the office and people are asking, what can they do to help me? And I don't get that when I come, you know, I start pouting. Oh, it is so tempting. It's a snare.

It's a net being spread out at your feet. And you think you're right. It's so wrong.

It begins in our hearts. And anger is often wrong because we're too quick to speak. Lisa Simpson says, better to remain silent, be thought a fool, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.

There's a danger in anger. Going beyond the reasonable. Talking too soon. That's why James says, know this, my beloved brother.

Let every person be quick to hear. Slow to speak. Slow to anger. For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. The idea, if you just don't speak, you might not sin.

[28 : 11] You might not get angry. You know, I love, I pray all the time. Lord, set a guard on my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips. Because sometimes they just open and flap and get me into all sorts of trouble.

So help me, Lord. We're too quick to speak. And that's where anger often goes wrong. It often goes wrong too because it makes room for the devil.

Look at verse 26. It's the final command here. He says, give no opportunity to the devil. You've seen the string of negatives.

You know, despite all our talk about spiritual warfare, spiritual armor, prayer walks, and territorial spirits, or what people talk about, we rarely talk about bitterness and anger opening a door for the devil.

Anger makes room for the devil. It says opportunity here in the ESV. But really it means place. Foothold is the way it's sometimes translated.

[29 : 08] I think that gets at it a little bit better. It's this idea we invite the devil back in. The Lord has delivered us in Jesus Christ and declared him to open shame. That one who once ruled over us, who once followed the course of this world.

But now, when we get angry far too often, we invite the devil back in. We give him a place. We give him a foothold.

We give him a seat in the community. We welcome him back into the local church to sift us like wheat. To cause strife. His attentions are well known.

He is the one who comes to steal, kill, and destroy, to distract, and disillusion, to plunder the house of God. He comes to blind the mind from seeing and savoring Jesus Christ.

It could not be more serious. Anger left unchecked is demonic. You want to resist the devil?

[30 : 09] Resist anger. Resist bitterness and wrath. Resist slurs and slanders, self-righteous laughs. Resist sulking and pouting. Resist slinking away from others when conflict arises.

Resist judging. Resist making a list of their sins and failures. Do you want to resist the devil? You want to do spiritual warfare? Make war on anger.

That's what he's saying. You capture the urgency of this command because four commands here, three of them negative. He's capturing the urgency of this.

Make war on anger. All of us struggle with it. All of us have a serious problem with it. Make war on it. Anger is sometimes right.

Anger is often wrong. But anger is never the only option. It's never the only. That's the lie of anger. That I have no choice. I'm painted in a corner.

[31 : 09] My back's against the wall. I have no choice but to get angry. It's never the only option. Even good anger. Good anger is expressed in biblical way.

Other biblical virtues. It's never the only option. The four commands. Three of the four commands, as I just said, are negative. Do not sin. Do not let the sun go down in your anger.

Do not give opportunity to the devil. The negatives are making clear there's another way to live. There's another way to do this.

If anger is the only option, it is because we're slaves of sin. But we're no longer slaves of sin. And therefore, anger is not the only option.

What is the way out of anger? Palaston's written a big book. Let me say a few things. First is strengthen faith.

[32 : 08] What's the way out of anger? What's another option when you're angry? Strengthen faith. Anger says, how in the world could your boss pass you up on a promotion after all you've done?

Faith says, all your circumstances have been ordered by your heavenly father. Anger says, I'm done with this marriage where I get no respect. Faith says, my grace is sufficient for you.

Anger says, no one cares about you. Indulge in porn on a quiet Friday night. Faith says, the Lord cares about you. The Lord knows you. The Lord's called you to himself.

Anger says, I have to say what I have to say. Faith says, I will only say what builds up. Thomas Watson says, faith argues the soul into patience.

That's right. We get angry. Angry is a common emotion. Faith argues the soul into patience. Angry people talk a lot. You cannot stop angry people from talking.

[33 : 05] They talk to themselves. Replaying and rehearsing the sins and failures of others.

Replaying, rehearsing conflicts. What they would have said. What would have been the takedown. What needed to be said in that moment.

You cannot get them to stop talking to themselves. They talk about others as well. To others.

Gossiping and slandering. Spreading speculation and suspicion. They talk to others.

Blasting them for what they've done. But they rarely, really talk to God. You talk yourself into anger. It starts immediately.

When you see something that offends you. You must talk your way out of it. It's hard to stay angry with someone you're talking about to the Lord. You know, one of the things Kim and I used to do.

We first got married. And we were two loud, angry sinners that got together. So if you're a loud, angry sinner, we can relate and help you after the meeting. Or at least be a little further up the road to encourage you.

[34 : 03] But we used to say that in our clothing and our right minds. Like they said, a legion. You know, we would agree that, you know, if we got no conflict. And the other offered to pray.

We would agree to that. So the ultimate takedown in the midst of someone's anger is. Can I please pray for you? You're like, no!

No, you cannot! You know? I'm fine! Can't you tell? But it's just so often.

What we needed to diffuse the situation. Anger thinks, I'm going to get everything right if it's the last thing I do. But prayer says, Lord help us.

It's hard to stay angry when you're talking to God about someone. It's hard to stay angry when you're continually asking God.

[35 : 00] God, am I angry for how this offends you or how it offends me? Am I angry because people aren't listening to you or not listening to me? Am I defending you or am I defending me? Am I defending your honor or my reputation?

What am I angry about? It's hard to stay angry when you're continually asking, how can I put this off? How can I be like Christ? Am I walking like Christ here? Faith argues the soul into patience by calling and depend on Christ to live in Christ.

So strengthen your faith. Faith. It's a surprising, counterintuitive response to anger. Strengthening faith.

Turn and trust the Lord. Pray for patience. Don't let the sun go down. Don't let it fester. Be patient. We first got married. We used to take that command literally. Don't let the sun go down. You're just going to wait the night away, you know. All we did was just get exhausted. You know, the point is, though, it's not literal and, you know, don't let the sun go down, although that's a good general practice.

[36 : 06] The idea is don't let it fester. Anger is not good being set in the cabinet worrying about itself. Anger grows alone. And so you need patience.

Patience is a surprising response to conflict. Patience is not where we are just indifferent or we put something up with something bad or good, or we sweep something under the rug as we often do in the South.

That is not biblical patience. Biblical patience is looking wrong in the eye and trust in the Lord anyway. One of the most common words translated, patient endurance in the New Testament, literally means remain under.

What is patient? Remain under provocation. Remain under offense without going sinfully into anger. Remain under this thing so good anger is patient.

It calmly endures wrong. It's not as if patience, though. It's just only enduring as if just grin and bear it or something like that.

[37 : 17] Patience far too often builds. Anger destroys, but patience builds. Patience purifies our hearts. How many times have you slept something off and realized you shouldn't say that in the morning?

How many times have you been better not saying something that you wanted to say in anger?

Why? Because patience cleanses our motives, softens our heart. Patience makes us the right kind of tough.

Someone willing to go to great lengths, not to even the score or to be seen as right, but to redeem and help. Patience is God-like. It is God who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Patience calls on the Spirit to do His work, binding together the church. So strengthen faith. Pray for patience. Make peace.

Don't let the sun go down. Don't let anger fester. But He's also saying, keep short list. Peace begins with you and me.

[38 : 25] Peace begins with confessing our sins. Confessing where we are wrong. You know, if you're convinced you are your biggest problem. If you're convinced your hands are really full with your own sin, you'll find it easy to confess to others and hard to stay angry with them.

But if you lose hold of that, you will not find it easy to confess. You'll find it instead hard to confess and easy to stay angry.

But the Bible is very clear. Take the log out of your own eye. Then you can see the speck. You can't see the speck with that log in your eye. Why? You can't see either when you see none of your sin and see only your brothers or your sisters.

So it begins with you. Anger begins in the heart and resolution begins in the heart too. Peace leads you to do whatever you can to make peace with your brother. That's why the scripture says leave your gift at the altar if you're unreconciled to your brother.

Anger divides. Anger splits marriages, splits friendship. It splits churches like that. Do you have a serious problem with anger?

[39 : 46] Yeah. I do too. I do too. But we have a more powerful savior. John Newton, the well-known author of the hymn Amazing Grace.

He's rightly known for that. But he's also rightly known in his day for his encouragement. What a friend he was. He has volumes of his letters that have been published.

Writing to William Wilberforce. And William Wilberforce's wife after he died. Encouraging them in the faith. In one letter he says, such a vivid image.

He says, suppose a man was going to New York to take possession of a large estate. And his carriage should break down a mile before he got to the city.

Which obliged him to walk, which forced him to walk the rest of the way. What a fool we should think him if we saw him wringing his hand and blubbering out all the remaining mile.

[40 : 47] My carriage is broken. My carriage is broken. My carriage is broken. And yet we do it, don't we? The point is, so often the Christian life is filled with missteps because we forget the inheritance we have at the other end.

It's also filled with missteps because we forget the person we have at the other end and who he is. You know, one of the things I've been thinking a lot about lately is I don't want there to be a great gap between the Christ I know by faith and the Christ I know by sight on that day.

I don't want there to be a great gap between what I know by faith and what I know by sight. I don't want there to be a great gap that I see him to be more gracious, more kind, more generous, more loving.

I don't want there to be a great gap where I see him as more powerful, more available, as if he had more resources that I did not use up. And I think that's what the apostle is calling us to here, to realize all that you have in Christ.

And if you are stuck in bitterness, you have a more powerful Savior who's at the right hand. If you are plagued by low-grade irritability and impatience, everybody walking on eggshells around you, you have a more wonderful, glorious Savior who is in you, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

[42 : 16] If your life is marked by sulking and self-pity and withdrawal, you have a more powerful Savior that wants to call you into a new life. If your friendships are severed by anger and conflict, you have a powerful, redeeming, restoring Savior.

If your marriage is marked by arguing and disputing, you have a more powerful Savior who's eager for you to learn what it means to put off the old man, which belongs to the former manner of life. Put on the new man, renewed after the likeness of God. Transform the new creation in Jesus Christ. That's what the Lord wants.

You have Christ. And because you have Christ, you have enough to lay your weapons down. Put them down. I had this vision of men coming up and taking the words of anger out.

[43 : 27] Take them out. Those words, they've been in your mouth too long. Take them out.

And they're putting in different words. That's what the Lord wants. That merely wants you to put off anger. He wants you to put on these new words.

Take up these new words. Build with new words. Encourage with new words. Shape with new words. Parent with new words. Love with new words.

That's what the Lord's here for. This is a stiff message. There's a powerful Savior, though, that is speaking it to us.

Father in heaven. Father in heaven, we offer ourselves to you sincerely and completely. We humble ourselves.

[44 : 31] All of us feel the brokenness that our anger has brought about. All of us. All of us.

If we see things rightly, squirm. At how we fumbled. Relationships. Friendships.

Our marriages. Our children. Our workplaces. Because of anger. Because of anger. Lord, would you come.

Set us free. Lord. Continue that work. Of sanctifying us. Into the image of Jesus Christ. Man fully alive.

And set free. From wrong anger. That we want to use. Our mouths. Our hearts.

[45 : 33] Our lives. To build up. That which you gave your life. To build. Help us, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander. Lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace. Please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com