

“Love Is Not Easily Angered”
(1 Corinthians 13:5c)

Introduction: The apostle Paul has been showing us what that love is like that the Spirit of God works in the hearts of God’s children in what is called His ordinary work. Remember that His extraordinary work was that by which He gave His supernatural gifts, such as prophecy, tongues or word of knowledge. His ordinary work is that work which He continues today, where He turns God’s elect from their sins and their hatred against God, to obedience and love for God. Paul tells us that this love, if it is genuine, will cause several things to happen in us. It will make us patient, so that we will bear up for a long time under the things we will have to suffer from the sins of others. It will make us kind, so that it will move us to do deeds of compassion and mercy and love towards those in need. It will cause us not to be jealous, so that we will be content with what we have and be thankful for what the Lord gives to others. It will kill our pride and humble us, so that we will esteem others as being as important as they are and help us to see ourselves as we really are. Three week ago, we saw that this love will cause us to respect authority and the social customs of men, or what is called proper etiquette, so that we will behave in a way which is appropriate in every situation. Last week, Paul told us that this love will make us think about more than just our own needs or our own desires, but will also cause us to think about the glory and pleasure of God, as well as the needs and happiness of others.

Now notice that Paul has told us positively what love is: Love is patient and kind, and negatively, what it is not: it is not jealous, prideful, or selfish. Love is all that is really good or virtuous in this world, and it is the opposite of all that is bad or vicious. This week, Paul tells us how love will also overcome one of the most common sins of our flesh, one which is really the fruit of these last three sins of jealousy, pride and selfishness: namely, unrighteous anger. What we need to see this evening is that,

The love which the Spirit of God creates in the heart of a believer is opposed to sinful anger.

I. First, we should ask the question, Is all anger wrong? Is it all sinful?

- A. The answer is no. There are times when it is good to be angry.
 - 1. In Ephesians 4:26, Paul writes, “Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.”
 - a. Obviously, Paul believed that it was possible to be angry and yet not to sin; to be angry, and yet not to offend God.
 - b. Sometimes you parents get angry with your children for some of the things they do, for instance, when they push each other or get into fights. You don’t hate them or want to hurt them, but you’re angry because they are doing things that might cause them to hurt each other. This isn’t a sin, but is right.
 - c. But yet it’s also obvious from our passage that this isn’t true of all anger. There is a kind of anger which is forbidden in Scripture. How then can we tell the difference?
 - 2. I think that for us to see more clearly what the Scripture allows and what it doesn’t allow, we will first need to define what anger is.
 - a. I would like to define it in this way: Anger is the strong opposition of our minds against anything that we consider to be morally wrong.
 - b. Usually, not always, but usually, we only get angry at those who are able to make morally significant decisions. We usually don’t get angry at a cold or at the weather, although sometimes we do get frustrated at these kinds of things when they make us feel bad or uncomfortable. We most often get angry at people because of the things they do to us or to others.
 - c. Now anger is not simply disagreeing with what others do. It is only when we become worked up over it in our minds and our passions are aroused that we are said to be angry.
- B. The Scripture plainly tells us that there are times when it is a sin to be angry, and obviously these are the things that we want to learn to avoid.
 - 1. First, anger is sinful when it makes you want to hurt or to take revenge on someone else.
 - a. All anger that makes us want to hurt someone in anyway is sin, because the Lord tells us that we must always seek for what is best for all men.
 - (i) Christ tells us in the Sermon on the Mount, “But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44).

- (ii) Paul writes, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not” (Rom. 12:14).
 - (iii) God commands us, in Leviticus 19:18, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.”
 - (iv) And Paul writes, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.’ But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head” (Rom. 12:19-20). We are not to seek to hurt or to avenge ourselves on our enemies. Rather, we are to do good to them. If they continue to do evil after that, then the Lord will bring retribution, but we must not.
- b. There is only one exception to this, and that is the sword which God gives to the state to execute judgment upon all who do evil. But as for us, Paul writes, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice” (Eph. 4:31).
2. Second, anger is sinful when the situation doesn’t require it. Anger is only justified when there is a good reason for it, not when there isn’t.
- a. We should certainly never become angry at someone for something which isn’t their fault.
- (i) When someone does something differently than we would do it, that isn’t a good reason for us to become angry.
 - (ii) If someone does the best they can at something, but it isn’t as good as we think it should be, that isn’t either.
- b. It’s also possible to be angry at someone for doing something right.
- (i) If one of your children did something wrong, and your brother or sister saw it, and your father or mother asked them about it, and they told the truth, and that got you into trouble, you would probably get angry with them. But should you?
 - (ii) People sometimes get angry at Christians for telling them the truth, because they don’t like to hear it. The Pharisees were angry with Jesus because He told them the truth.
 - (iii) Criminals get angry at the state for punishing them for their crimes.
 - (iv) Sometimes we get angry when our brothers and sisters point out things in our lives which are sinful, even though they’re just trying to help us. Solomon writes, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy” (Prov. 27:6), and the psalmist writes, “Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me, it is oil upon the head; do not let my head refuse it” (Ps. 141:5).
 - (v) Sometimes we may even get angry at God for the things He does. Jonah was angry with God because He was going to be merciful to the Ninevites. Sometimes if things don’t go well at work, or at home, we get angry with God. But should we?
- c. Anger is also unjustified when we become angry over small offenses.
- (i) There are times when it is good to be angry, but not all the time.
 - (ii) The person who gets angry at the smallest things won’t really be able to fulfill what Paul tells us here: that love is “not easily angered.”
 - (iii) James tells us that Christians should be “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (1:19).
 - (iv) Wisdom teaches us to have a calm and peaceful spirit, and not to become angry except in extraordinary circumstances.
- d. Anger is also wrong when it is mainly because the person has offended us and not because they have offended God.
- (i) The only thing that we have a right to be angry about is sin. And when we become angry at it, it should be because it is an offense against God. If there is no sin, then we have no right to be angry.
 - (ii) If someone does sin against us, we need to remember that it is a much greater offense against God than it is against us. This is why it should make us angry.
 - (iii) If we are angry only because someone has sinned against us, that is selfish. We need to remember that we do not belong to ourselves anymore, but we belong to God.
 - (iv) To get angry because God is offended, is called zeal. This is what Christ was full of when He

drove the money changers out of the temple with His scourge of cords. Christ put up with many personal offenses, but not when they were against God.

(v) Anger is good when it is a holy anger against sin, but not when it is caused by a personal offense.

3. Lastly, anger is sinful if it is more than the situation warrants.
 - a. Our anger may grow to the point that we lose control of ourselves.
 - (i) It is possible to literally become drunk with anger and filled with rage when we should only be filled with the Spirit of God (Eph. 5:18).
 - (ii) But it should never be greater than is necessary to do what is right.
 - b. It may also last longer than it should.
 - (i) Solomon writes, "Do not be eager in your heart to be angry," and then he adds, "For anger resides in the bosom of fools" (Ecc. 7:9).
 - (ii) And when the apostle Paul writes, "Be angry, and yet do not sin," he also adds, "Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity" (Eph. 4:26-27).
 - (iii) If we let ourselves be angry towards someone for too long, we may soon come to hate him. But we are not to hate anyone, but to love all men even as ourselves.
 - (iv) These, then, are just some of the ways in which anger can be sinful.

II. The second thing we need to see is how the love of the Spirit of God is able to help us overcome this anger.

- A. First, we have already seen how Christian love is the just the opposite of all unjust anger.
 1. If we love God, it will help us not to be angry with others for little or no reason. The more we love Him, the more we will love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves.
 2. If we love God, it will also help us to be more concerned about God's honor than our own, so that we won't become as angry over those things that people do against us.
 3. And thirdly, the more we love God, the more it will also help us control our passions by holding them in check. Love does not behave unbecomingly, but seeks to give glory to God in every situation.
- B. But secondly, we need to understand how the fruits of Christian love help us to fight against the root of all unrighteous anger: namely, our pride and our selfishness.
 1. Love is contrary to pride.
 - a. Pride is one of the main reasons we become angry. It makes us more sensitive to the things that others do, especially when they do them to us.
 - b. But we have already seen that this love that God has put in our hearts is not boastful, it is not arrogant. It is able to humble us by showing us what we are really like in God's eyes. When we see that in ourselves, we really don't deserve any good thing, and that any good thing we receive, we only receive by the goodness and mercy of God, it makes it easier to endure the things that people do to us that are wrong, because we don't really deserve any better.
 2. But love is also contrary to selfishness.
 - a. Selfishness is what makes us angry at others when they stand in the way of something we want.
 - b. But this love of the Spirit will make us more concerned about God's interests, than our own. It will help us to take our eyes off of ourselves and put them on God, on His honor and the honor of His Son, Jesus Christ. If we do this, we will be less likely to get angry at someone for crossing our wills, but more zealous for God's honor when someone crosses His.
 - c. Also, if we become more focussed on the needs of our neighbor, it will make us less focussed on our own desires, and therefore less likely to become offended if those desires are not fulfilled.

III. In closing I would ask you to examine yourself to see what is in your heart.

- A. Are you an angry person? Do you have an angry spirit? Are you angry often or angry for a long time? Has the sun often gone down on your anger? Does your anger come from pride or selfishness? Are you often angry for the wrong reasons, because you didn't get your way, and not because God wasn't honored? Is there smoldering embers in your heart right now just waiting to be fanned into a flame? Examine your heart and see whether or not what Paul says is true of Christian love is true of you.
- B. This passage warns us this evening against sinful anger. Knowing that we are so prone to get angry and are so full of pride and selfishness, and knowing that we live in a world that is full of circumstances that will stir

up this sin within us, we need to be careful to pray against it. We must put this sin to death in our members by being built up in the love of God. To help us do this, let's consider these few last things:

1. First, we should consider all the times that we have done things which have made God and our neighbors angry.
 - a. We fall short of God's requirements every day. If we were to stand in our own righteousness, in our own good works, we would all fall under His wrath and judgment. Can we afford to get angry at others when God in Christ has forgiven us so much?
 - b. Just think about all the times you have done to your neighbors what they have done to you, or at least things like these. Should we really get angry with them when we do the same things or even worse?
2. Second, we should think about how destroys our peace. Angry people are among the most miserable people on earth. Bitterness can tear you apart. It is really worth it?
3. Third, when we are angry, it destroys our ability to serve and honor God. It keep us from communion with God and keep us from being able to receive from Him and from His Word. Since these times are so rare, is it worth it to throw it all away on our anger?
4. Lastly, we should consider the fact that the Bible says that those who are angry are not suitable friends for anyone.
 - a. Solomon wrote, "Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, lest you learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself" (Prov. 22:24-25), for, he says, "An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression" (29:22).
 - b. His example is evil and his way of life is condemned both by God and men. Should we follow it?
 - c. Now perhaps we have found that we are guilty of a little anger or perhaps a lot, but all of us have some, and so all of us need God's grace. If the Lord has shown you areas in your life where you need to repent, turn to Him now and confess your sin to Him. He is gracious and will forgive you. But you must acknowledge your sin and turn to Him in faith. If you will, He will not only forgive your sins, but will also give you the power you need to put off that sin and to cultivate the love which will overpower it and keep it subdued. May the Lord grant His grace to each of us this evening to do just that, that His love may abound and that we might glorify Him. Amen.