

Ephesians 4:26

Today's passage of Scripture continues a rather lengthy and very important section of Ephesians 4. It should be noted that Paul has moved from the theological indicative to the lifestyle imperative. In other words, he has stated what is true (we are called to live in the new life that God has called us into) and now he is moving to the application of that truth (how we should live). This is both incredibly necessary and helpful! The Bible does not simply instruct us with general exhortations, it gives us practical and tangible steps to take, in faith, so that our lives would honor God.

1. Righteous indignation

- a. Today's passage begins with an interesting little phrase... "Be angry..."
- b. Some might think that this is an odd thing for the Bible to command!
 - i. Anger is seen in many circles as always wrong
 - ii. In fact, there are Christians who would teach that raising your voice, showing disapproval and reacting with any fervor at all is an indication of sin
 - iii. The problem with this (among other things) is that Jesus' example contradicts this kind of thinking!
 - iv. Recall that Christ was angry at the Temple (twice)
 - v. He opposed the Pharisees vehemently and he rebuked the demons
- c. The point is that there is a biblical category for anger
- d. Anger is the proper response to sin and sin's consequences for the precise reason of love
- e. If we:
 - i. Love God
 - ii. Love others
- f. Then we will be angry with those things that take away from His deserved glory and the wellbeing and joy of our neighbor
 - i. It should make us angry when: children are being mutilated in the name of "sexual freedom", people are being attacked by terrorists, governing officials are illegally and immorally profiting off of the backs of those they have been elected to serve, the Bible is misrepresented and taught falsely, God's name is attached to hatred and racism, families are abandoned by deadbeat dads and the like
- g. There is no condemnation in Scripture for anger at sin... but there is a qualification

2. A Ditch to Avoid

- a. Notice here that Paul says we should be angry "but do not sin"

- b. Two things matter here
 - i. Evidently there is a way to demonstrate displeasure without dishonoring God
 - ii. Second, it must be easy to fall into the trap of sinful indignation if the Lord sees fit to provide this warning so soon after the command!
- c. Anger becomes sinful when our responses move from love and an earnest desire for God's glory and man's good to a bloodthirsty or indifferent reaction
- d. I can be angry with something or someone because I desire to see their repentance and sanctification OR I can be angry at someone and desire to see their demise as I gain revenge
 - i. One is a response of grace, the other is a response of the flesh
 - ii. Jesus overturned tables because the religious elites had made a mockery of God even as they created a system that ostracized the people from true worship
 - iii. I often overturn tables (figuratively speaking) because I'm embarrassed or inconvenienced
 - 1. One is rooted in love for God and others
 - 2. The other is based on carnal self-preservation
- 3. A diagnostic
 - a. Here are a few questions we can ask to discern the difference
 - i. If this person repented, would I rejoice or feel cheated?
 - ii. If this issue went away, would God gain more glory or would I be more exalted?
 - iii. Is there a clear condemnation in Scripture for this sin? Do I pray as much for the person's repentance as I do their judgment?
 - b. These questions will help us discern the difference between righteous indignation and carnal anger