

BE ANGRY...

Dowlen Road, September 6, 2009 PM

Introduction:

- A. The stories:
 - 1. Thirty year old Darrick Burke punched seventy five year old Wayne Ingram, knocking him down and causing him to hit his head. Ingram later died from his injuries. Why? Burke alleges that Ingram cut him off in traffic.
 - 2. Thirteen year old Gregory Harris took a baseball bat from his equipment bag after a little league ball game and struck fifteen year old Jeremy Rourke twice. The second blow to the head killed him. Why? Harris was angry because Rourke teased him about pitching badly in a game.
 - 3. It is a problem as old as Cain and Abel (**Genesis 4:8b**). Why? (**Genesis 4:3-7**).
- B. How about us; what do we do when we get angry?
 - 1. It's easy to read stories like these and to feel pretty good about ourselves. We think, "I've never beat anyone up or killed anyone out of anger."
 - 2. But what do we do when we get angry?
 - a. Do we allow all kinds of ugly, hateful things to flood from our mouths?
 - b. Do we hang on to those angry feelings and nurse bitter grudges?
 - c. Do we vent our bitterness by gossiping to other people?
 - d. Do we quietly say and do hurtful things to even the score?
 - 3. Maybe we haven't killed anyone, but...
 - a. Have we wounded our spouse or alienated our kids with hateful things we've said when we were angry?
 - b. Have we damaged our influence on the job?
 - c. Have we hindered the work of God with our angry gossip or bitter grudges against brethren? What do we do when we are angry?
- C. God certainly has expectations.
 - 1. Many Bible passages address the danger of anger that is out of control and the need to reign in this powerful emotion.
 - 2. In this lesson we want to examine only two verses (**Ephesians 4:26-27**). It is interesting that, as Paul begins a lengthy discussion of this new person we are to become in Christ, he chooses to single out how we handle anger as a point of emphasis.
 - 3. I want us to notice four things he says in this passage.

Be Angry

- A. It may seem to be an odd way to begin a warning about anger, but what he says is important.
 - 1. It's wrong to conclude that because anger can be dangerous, it is always wrong. The truth is there are times when we should be angry.
 - a. The Bible says there are times when God is angry (**Numbers 11:1**).
 - b. Jesus also had moments when He was angry (**Mark 3:5**).
 - c. God created us with this same passion. Anger is not some rogue emotion planted in our hearts by the devil.
 - 2. There are times when He wants us to be angry.
 - a. When we contemplate the slaughter of the unborn that happens every day in our country, it ought to make us angry.
 - b. When false teachers pervert the gospel, deceive people and get rich in the process, it ought to make us angry.
 - c. When men use the name of our great God and our loving Savior as expletive to insult each other, it ought to make us angry.
 - 3. In fact, anger can be a healthy emotion.
 - a. Anger is a powerful emotion with the capacity to provoke us to take action. When those actions are controlled and righteous, this can be a good thing.
 - b. When it provokes me to defend my Lord or answer false teaching or work to halt this assault on the unborn, those are all good things.
 - c. Sometimes it is good to be angry.
- B. But not all anger is good. Sometimes our anger is motivated by attitudes that are sinful.
 - 1. For example, I may get angry with a brother because I am jealous of his good fortune or envy his blessings. Anger that is stirred by evil motives is also evil.
 - 2. Because this is true, I need to ask myself an important question when I feel my temperature going up: Why am I angry?
 - a. If it's for just reasons, then I need to take just actions to address it.
 - b. But if it is driven by some evil motive, then I need to get over it and move on.
 - 3. It is not necessarily wrong to be angry. When it happens, I need to examine my heart and make sure it is for the right reason.
 - 4. But even when anger is just, I have to take this next admonition to heart...

And Yet Do Not Sin

- A. Whatever the reason for my anger, I'm never justified in committing sin. Even justified anger does not justify sin.
 - 1. As we have seen, anger is a powerful, intense emotion. Left unchecked, it can provoke the very worst behavior in us and lead to all kinds of evil, like those we've already seen.
 - 2. Thus, Paul would give us this admonition to reign in this powerful emotion. Even when I'm angry, I must control myself and make sure my behavior is always godly.
 - 3. Not everyone gets this. There are people who use anger to justify their evil conduct. They get angry, do something foolish (yell, cuss, violent), and then justify their conduct by saying, "He just made me so mad."

4. Look again at Paul's admonition; there is an unwritten assumption.
 - a. Even when we are angry, we can control ourselves. We are no hopeless subject to this passion. God holds us accountable to control it.
 - b. It does not matter how angry I become or how justified that anger is, it is never an excuse for sin.
- B. This brings us to a critical issue: When is that line crossed? When does anger become sin (**I Thessalonians 3:11-13, 5:15**)?
1. My words and actions are always to be governed by the principle of love. This means that I am always seeking the good of the other guy and never doing anything designed to harm him. This applies even when dealing with an enemy who does not extend that same love toward me (**Romans 12:18-21**).
 2. So here's the line: When I say or do anything out of anger designed to hurt the other guy, I've crossed the line. I've sinned. Let's be plain:
 - a. When I get angry and start yelling at people, I've crossed the line (Proverbs 15:1).
 - b. When I say hurtful, sarcastic or insulting things, I've crossed the line. When I retaliate and do little things to even the score and "get back at" someone, I've crossed the line (Romans 12:17,19).
 - c. When I gossip about someone, I've crossed the line (Matthew 18:15).
 3. These kinds of actions – a lot more that we could include – are not designed to help a person or situation. They hurt and wound; they accomplish nothing good.
 4. When we are angry, God holds us accountable to bring that anger under control and resist the urge to do things that are sinful.
 5. But there is more we must do...

Do Not Let The Sun Go Down On Your Anger

- A. Early on in our marriage, Heidi and I were told that this meant we should never go to bed with a problem between us unresolved.
1. If there was an issue between us, we **MUST** work it out before we went to sleep. We tried this for a while, but found that it was really difficult to reason with each other at 3:30 a.m. when you're angry and sleep deprived.
 2. The truth is, sometimes it is better **NOT** to tackle a problem immediately, when you're worked up. It's typically better to cool off first and then tackle the problem with a clear mind.
- B. What then is Paul saying?
1. Paul is urging us to get rid of anger quickly. We may not be able to work out every problem before sunset. But we can make the decision (the determine choice of the will) to lay aside that rage we feel before the day is over.
 - a. If I've got an unresolved issue in my marriage, before I go to sleep I can choose to affirm my love for my wife and my commitment to stay with her. I can promise that tomorrow we will figure out a solution to this problem because we are staying together. Even if the problem is not solved, I can choose to let go of the anger.
 - b. If I have a problem with a brother, as I put my head to rest I can decide not to be angry and pray that God would work through His providence to help us reach a solution. Even though the problem is not resolved, I can choose to lay aside the anger.
 2. Now some would complain that this is really hard and be reluctant to do it. So, Paul gives us the incentive we need to lay aside our anger.

Do Not Give The Devil An Opportunity

- A. We need to remember that the devil is scheming against us (**Ephesians 6:10-11**).
1. Our adversary is looking for some weak moment, some opportunity to assault us.
 2. When the allies assaulted the beaches of Normandy on D-Day during WWII, their first objective was to establish a foothold. They wanted to get a piece of ground in Europe from which they could launch their assault against the Germans and ultimately drive them out of France.
 3. This is what Satan seeks. He's looking for a foothold, a piece of ground in our lives from which he can launch his assault on us.
- B. Too often we allow Satan to use our anger as this foothold in our lives.
1. We reject Paul's admonition to let it go and choose instead to hang on to it. From this foothold, Satan launches his assault to destroy us. What have we decided to do with our anger?
 - a. Are you still mad about something (spouse, parents, kids, neighbors, brethren)? If you are, how's that working out for you? Has it strengthened your marriage, drawn you close to your family, helped advance the cause of Christ?
 - b. Or, has the devil been using this foothold to assault you?
 - 1) Has he persuaded you to be bitter toward your spouse?
 - 2) Have you allowed him to alienate yourself from your parents/kids?
 - 3) Has he convinced you that it's okay to keep yourself aloof from some brother in Christ?
 - 4) Has he made you comfortable with gossip – complaining to other people about the way you've been mistreated?
 - c. If so, how much longer are you going to allow him to have this foothold in your life? Will you let him destroy you?
 - d. Don't buy the devil's lie that this offense is just too great to get over.
 - 1) After her son's killer was executed, Thomasine Crow made this statement about him: "I can hate Ricky Blackmon and be miserable and bitter the rest of my life, or I can accept the apology and learn to be happy with that and go on. That is what I choose to do."
 - 2) Hanging on to that anger is a choice. We can choose to keep it, or we can choose to give it up.
 2. Paul urges us to give it up before the sun goes down so that we do not give the devil a foothold in our lives.
 3. It's not really a choice about what we will do with our anger, but what we will do with Satan.

Conclusion: Who's reigning in your life?

If you're not living for the Lord, you've given your life over to Satan. It's time to put God in charge once again.