

“Anger” // Ephesians 4:24–32

// Smoke from a Fire #3

I want to **join our campus teams** in welcoming back all of our college students this weekend. Whether **you’re back from summer break** or if this is your **first time** joining us, our church is just not the same without you here.

Our desire is that the **Summit would become your spiritual family** during your time in college. So, **if you aren’t already connected**, we would love to help you get plugged in.

The **first thing you should put on your calendar**—ahead of *class* and *studying* and all of that other non-important stuff—should be to join us at SC United this Thursday at 7pm at the Brier Creek Campus. It is going to be a **powerful night of worship and a great time to connect with each other**. Plus (and this may be the biggest draw for you guys), there will be **food trucks...and they will all be pre-paid for**. That’s right, you just walk up and say, “Give me that overpriced burger and fries” and they’ll do it no questions asked. My personal college motto was “If it’s free, it’s for me” and I turned out ok. (**And adults**, don’t try to put back on your favorite college outfit and show up. **We can tell.**)

Listen: There are a **lot of great college ministries** here in the Triangle, and we are honored to partner with many of them here at TSC. Our main thing is for you to be connected and engaged in ministry somewhere. But we do **want this church to feel like home for all of you**, and for those of you wanting to get more connected to this

Works consulted:

“What Is Righteous Anger?,” Brad Hambrick and David Powlison

God’s Wisdom for Navigating Life, Tim Keller

“Be Angry, Sin Not,” Tim Keller

“The Healing of Anger,” Tim Keller

“Enemies of the Heart - Anger,” Andy Stanley

church and its ministries, this is your event—you can also **drop by our Next Steps area** after our service where we’ll have people ready to tell you more about it.

Ephesians 4: We are on **week 3** in a series on some of the most controlling emotions in our lives. We **are calling it “Smoke from a Fire,”** playing off an analogy by St. Augustine who said that our **deepest emotions** often function like smoke from a fire that can show us what is going on in our hearts. (**Now, every single week I am trying to remind you that for some**, there’s a lot more going on in these emotions than I can deal with up here—**these emotions** may be tied into past traumatic experiences, destructive relationships, and even your physiological makeup. For those of you who suspect you may be in that category, I encourage you to engage with our G4 ministries (summitrdu.com/g4) here.

The **first week we looked at depression**; the second **anxiety**; this week we are going to get into **another emotion all of us deal with to varying degrees**—anger.

Anger, as we know, can be very destructive relationship, and one difficult to deal with in our hearts. I heard about an **elderly couple** who were talking one evening about their many fights over the years. And the wife, in a moment of really humble candor, said, ‘Honey, I’m so sorry I’ve blown up so many times at you over the years. How do you manage to stay so calm?’ To which the husband replied, ‘**Oh, it’s easy. After you blow up at me I just go and clean the toilet.**’ ... ‘*And that helps?*’ she said. ‘Oh yes,’ he replied, ‘because I’m using your toothbrush.’”

So, there are **good ways and bad ways** to deal with anger. I **don't know anyone** who doesn't look back and wish they could take something back they said or did in anger.

- One of my **favorite Seinfeld episodes: George Castanza** leaves a message and tries to erase
- Or **have you ever sent an email** in haste that you wish you could take back? Or accidentally replied all when you were responding in anger? **Brad O and the royal blue font** (using a royal blue font to distract us from the fact that this is a bunch of dudu...). The guy was decently gracious—our relationship was never the same.

Most of us can look back and see relationships that were lost, or at least damaged, through anger. Some of you may have lost jobs, or even gone to jail, because of an inability to control anger.

And, btw, **don't make the mistake of thinking** that if you are not a person prone to violent outbursts that you have no issues with anger. Some of you are more aggressive in how you process anger, but some of you are more **passive** in your approach. **Someone makes you mad, and you give them the silent treatment** or the cold shoulder—you punish them by removing the blessing of your presence from them—as if you are God and simply turning your face away is punishment enough. You nurse a bitterness toward them that comes out first as sarcasm, turns into avoidance, and leads eventually to disdain for them or for a whole group of people they represent.

Brad Hambrick, our pastoral counselor wrote out a list of statements we make that shows we are nursing anger. **Statements like,**

- *I'm not angry! I'm just frustrated*
- *Why can't I have a bad day without it being a big deal?*
- *Oh, and I guess you never make a mistake.*
- *You're being too sensitive.*
- *I'm sick of being the only one who ever says "I'm sorry."*
- *Sorry to unload on you, but I just needed to vent.*

Chances are, he says, if you've made **any of these kinds of statements**, you're dealing with an anger issue you've never admitted to yourself and can **end up being destructive** even in really subtle ways.

Our focus today is not on the best and healthiest expressions of anger, but on what our anger reveals about the state of our hearts. That's where the Bible's focus is—before it teaches you how to manage them, it wants you to learn to **read them**.

We have an angry society, don't we? If you have any doubts, just turn on the talk shows at night—any of them! You **turn over to MSNBC or CNN** and they are indignant and losing their minds; flip over to FOX and they are talking about the same stuff equally angry. **People seem queued up** and ready to be angry—in the classroom, at work, on the freeway. **So, Paul's words here in Ephesians** seem like they are written for us:

Ephesians 4:25–32

26 Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger, **27** and don't give the devil an opportunity. **29** Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear... **31** Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. **32** And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

In this passage, I see **a confusing command**: "*Be angry but do not sin.*" Second, I see Paul's **answer to anger**. Third, I see some indications for how we can **"be angry like Jesus."**

First,

I. A Confusing Command: “Be angry and do not sin...” (vs. 26)

Note first that Paul commands us to “*be angry...*” That’s an imperative. There are times you must be angry.

- Some of us were **raised to think that any feelings of anger are wrong**, but that’s not a Christian idea. **Buddhists teach the annihilation of emotion** as a virtue. Christians don’t believe that.
- **Rather**, the Bible teaches anger as a necessary part of love. **Anger is a destructive energy released in defense of something you love**.
- Which may sound bad, but **think about it**: When you **love the person dying of cancer**, you hate (and are angry at) the cancer that is destroying them.
- **If I love my kids**, I hate and am angry at the moral cancer—like dishonesty or rebellion—that I see destroying their souls.)
- **If I love the glory of God**, I am angry at whatever diminishes that or attacks it.
- **Jesus was a person who got angry— sometimes even violently so.**
 - **In Mark 3**, after he heals the man with the shriveled hand, he discerns that the Pharisees are only interested in catching him breaking the Sabbath. And Jesus is filled with anger, Mark says, that they would promote religious custom over their love of a fellow human being. His anger toward them grew out of his love for the him.
 - **In Matthew 21**, Jesus got violently angry at the religious leaders and moneychangers who had basically kicked out of the Temple all the outsiders, so he made a **whip** out of some cords and drove them out. **He didn’t regret that later**. He didn’t say to his disciples, “You know, I’m sorry. I really got carried away back there. I probably should have used my

¹ **Christian counselor David Powlison says**, “The very fact that [God gets angry] tells us that anger can be utterly right, good, appropriate, beautiful, the only fair

words rather than those whips.” **No, he went to the cross sinless**. That wasn’t a sin.

- Now, to be clear **I’m not saying you should** drive out people with whips when you get angry, because you have neither the clarity nor the control that Jesus had—we **all clear** on that?
- Don’t want to **get complaints this week** where you tried this and blamed it on me...
- I’m just trying to **say that if you never get angry**, you’re not very much like Jesus.¹
- **The church father John Chrysostom**, “It is true that he that is **angry without cause sins, but he who is not angry when there is cause also sins** (and perhaps to an even greater degree).”
- You **should be angry** when you hear about the rights of others being trampled on. You should be angry when you hear stories of people being abused by people they trusted. **In the face of evil, if you aren’t angry, you’re not loving**.
- Jesus **got angry sometimes** because he cared so much!

So, *be angry*, Paul says, but do not sin.

- **Sinful anger comes from loving the wrong things, or loving the right things out of proportion**.
 - **St. Augustine** said: “The root of our sinfulness is **disordered loves**.”
 - **If what we love is messed up**, then our anger will be messed up, too.
- It is not **wrong, for example, to value your name and reputation**, but if you love those things too much, you will get inordinately angry whenever your ego is insulted.
- **If you love control, or convenience**, then when those things are threatened you’ll get angry.

response to something evil, and the loving response on behalf of evil’s victims.” David Powlison in *Anger: Escaping the Maze*, 1.

Whenever something makes you mad, you should always ask yourself what your anger is defending:

- **For example:** I have a home office I work from in the morning, if my kids irritate me because they are running around outside my office and making it hard for me to work, what am I angry about? There might be a teaspoon of righteous anger in there at how they can be thoughtless about others, but mainly my anger is that I'm being inconvenienced. Anger is always defense of something you love—and what I love is my own convenience. I'm not thinking about how precious they are and what little time I have with them, I'm only thinking about how my plans got messed up.
- **When your teenager comes home late**, what drives your anger? The fact that he or she caused you to lose sleep or to worry isn't the biggest issue. Emotionally, you may want to make it the biggest issue, because that's how the episode affected you.² But the biggest issue is their disregard for rules. **Is that what your anger is focused on**, or is it on the effect their actions had on you?
- **If I get mad at my wife because she is texting** when I am trying to talk with her—is it lovingly motivated because I am concerned with the harm her self-absorption causes to her and those around her, or because I feel inconvenienced she is not paying attention to me? **Be honest now!**
- **Anybody else get mad when traffic is slow on 540** and those cars shoot the ramp to try and get as far as they can before trying to force their way in? *Ooh, I get righteously indignant* and hang 2 inches off that bumper in front of me so they can't do it... **Is my anger motivated by loving concern** for their selfishness, or because they are inconveniencing me? **Here's how I know mine is not loving anger:** *When I am the one shooting down that little lane, it's fine.* I've got places to be. And if people knew that, I'm sure they'd understand.
- **When you get mad at work because** your contributions weren't recognized, is your anger fueled a love of your own praise? Do you get **just as mad when credit** is withheld from someone else?

(Same moral corruption, but probably doesn't anger you as much because it doesn't cross your selfish desires.)

- The point: Our **anger becomes problematic** because our loves are out of order; and, **we deal with disordered anger** by addressing the **disordered loves** that fuels it.

That leads to #2...

II. Paul's Answer to (Unrighteous) Anger: "Put on the new man..." (vs. 24, 31–32)

You may notice that Paul's whole discussion of anger comes as a series of commands—but the **problem** is that some of them seem impossible:

For example, **Paul commands:**³¹ **Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice.**³² **And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another...** To someone who is really angry, or really hurt, this seems like an impossible command. I mean, **how do you just turn off an emotion?** "Stop being bitter; be kind and forgiving instead."

- **Whenever I talk about anger and forgiveness**, I've learned there are 3 kinds of people out there struggling with what I say: The **1st group** believes they ought to forgive but can't muster the courage to do it; the **2nd group** feels they would be letting the offender off the hook if they did, which doesn't seem right; the **3rd group** claims to have gone through the motions of forgiveness, but memories keep coming back leaving them to wonder if they've ever really forgiven at all.³

So, the question is how you do we develop the ability to do these things? That's where it helps to consider that these commands are

² Gary Thomas, *Sacred Parenting*, p. 111.

³ Adapted from Andy Stanley, "Enemies of the Heart—Anger"

part of a **bigger section starting in vs. 24** in which Paul tells us we must “put on the new man” (vs. 24), which means to live in the new reality Christ has created for us.

Paul hints **2 elements of this new reality** that enable us to get rid of unrighteous anger:

The first is the end of vs. 32: “...forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.”

- Write that down this way: **We recognize that we are first sinners and only secondly sinned against.**
- (That’s a **phrase I’ve used with over the years** that a marriage counselor gave to me...so helpful in our marriage...)
 - (Now, what I **don’t intend with that phrase is for one spouse to beat the other one over the head with it:** “You should quit complaining about my sin. You’ve been way worse to Jesus than I’m being to you right now so stop whining. Remember? ‘First sinner, second sinned against?’”
 - **No, it’s something you use to think about yourself**—I am a man who is deeply forgiven, and forgiven of far more than I’ll ever have to forgive Veronica of.)
- 10K talents?
- It means that I approach any situation deeply aware of how much I have been forgiven of.
 - **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** talked about the anger a lot of Christians feel at church when they see some of the inconsistency and immaturity of people around them. That’s stage 1 of growing in Christ, he said, you become aware of God’s righteousness and everyone else’s sin. But it’s **only stage 1...**
 - **Same thing here:** It’s not that I am unaware of people’s sins, just that I am more aware of how much God has forgiven me of.

Paul gives us the **second element of this new reality** at the end **vs. 26** when he says, “Don’t let the sun go down on your anger.” That means **We have resigned as Judge of the Universe.**

- **Not letting the sun go down on your wrath** means I don’t carry with me to bed **the burden of righting all wrongs:** God has promised to do that, so I can **lay my head down** on my pillow at night and go to sleep.

Paul **only alludes to this here in in Eph 4** in that quick phrase, but he really unpacks it another place where he talks about anger—Romans 12 (**PAUL IS A PREACHER, SO COMPARE WHERE HE TALKS ABOUT THINGS**), so if you have your Bible, and you’re superfast with your fingers, turn there.

Romans 12:17 Repay no one evil for evil... **18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (Note: this is Paul indicating he doesn’t mean keeping yourself or your kids in an abusive situation. (See, he says, ‘if possible, so far as it depends on you,’ which means that there will be times when it’s *not* possible, **even after you’ve done everything you can**, and you have to remove yourself from the situation. BTW, if you think that’s you, let me encourage you to get counsel—let us help you.) Paul goes on: **19** Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” **20** To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” You say, “Well, that sounds exactly like what I’d like to do to them!” This is a **Jewish metaphor**.⁴ **Heaping burning coals** on their heads, as Paul sees it, will do **1 of 2 things** to them: It will either **wake them up** to the injustice of what they are doing to you, which is... **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (which would be awesome);

- Or, it will **increase God’s judgment on them** for the day he brings vengeance. (IOW, as they keep treating you badly after you show

⁴ Proverbs 25:21

them kindness, **God is up there taking notes**. And at the end God will say to them, “**After all the kindness they showed you**, this was how you’ve treated them?” And **God’s judgment** will be worse on them. Your kindness will literally heap hot coals...)

The point is you can live **free of the burden of feeling like you have to make things right**. God promises to carry that burden.

- **You see**, I know that **for that person who wronged me, 1 of 2 things is true**: Either this person’s sins against me are going to be covered by Jesus’s death on the cross, where mine were covered, also; or this person will pay for them eternally, in hell. **Either way**, I don’t have to carry around the bitterness that comes from feeling like they are just going to get away with it and my score will never be settled.
- And because I believe that, **I can show grace**, which, **again**, will do 1 of 2 things to this person—either be to them like hot coals waking them up to the injustice of what they are doing to me; or, increasing God’s judgment on them like literal hot coals when one day he brings vengeance!
- Either way, **we can make like Elsa** and ‘let it go.’

BTW, **one of the charges the world** likes to make about Christians is that we believe in a judging God, which makes us judgmental. **VOLF**. Only spoiled Westerners, who have never really experienced injustice themselves, could ever say that. Actually, it **is the opposite**...

- And, when you try to take on the role of Judge, it corrupts you.
 - That’s **why Paul says** that letting the sun go down on our wrath **gives opportunity to the devil**.
 - It corrupts us—**It’s like putting on the ring in** Lord of the Rings. *My precious anger...* Turns you into a **dark and vengeful**...
 - You see, you and I **weren’t designed** to play Judge on others for sin. For one, we have sin of our own to deal with. Second, because our loves are out of order we’ll almost never get

ultimate judgment right; we’ll mix in our own selfish judgment.

- **Trying to play Judge over wrongs done** to us will just corrupt us, **Paul says**, which is why we should turn over our anger to God as the sun goes down and trust him with final judgment.
- **(Now, one quick caveat before we move on: When Paul says** vengeance belongs to God he doesn’t mean there should be no courts or laws or justice. In fact, he anticipates that objection and goes on in the next chapter, Romans 13, to say, that governing authorities are God’s means of protective justice. On earth he’s committed the 1st wave of that justice to them. We have laws and courts that are supposed to be as impartial as they can—and most are set up to try and be impartial. *And I know it’s not a perfect system and we should work to correct that but it is a system ordained by God, and it is God’s first wave of protective justice here on earth.*
- **So he doesn’t mean do away with courts: What he means is that individuals** should not carry the burden of obtaining ultimate justice for themselves on earth. God will see to that.)

So, Paul’s **answer to unrighteous anger** is putting on the new man, which means **wrestling with the implications of the gospel**—**embrace the depths of Christ’s forgiveness** of us and resign as Judge of the Universe because we trust in God’s judgment.

So now, let’s spend our last few minutes considering what loving anger looks like. Paul gives us a couple of hints. **We’ll call this section:**

III. How to be Angry Like Jesus (vv. 26–31)

A. **Loving anger is redemptive, not vindictive (vs. 29)**

- It is **directed toward the problem**, not the person. Here is how Paul says it, ²⁹ **Let no corrupting** (tearing down, destroying) **talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.**

- Your **goal is building up**. Your desire to is to remove the evil from the person but save the person—**give grace** to the person—like Christ did for you.
- Your **hatred for the sin comes from an overwhelming love for the sinner**.
 - People **sometimes dislike the phrase “hate the sin, love the sinner.”** They say, “Well, how can you do that? You either love that person the way they are or you don’t.”
 - **C.S. Lewis**, more than 50 years ago, said, *“For a long time I used to think this a silly, straw-splitting distinction: how could you hate what a man did and not hate the man? But years later it occurred to me that there was one man to whom I had been doing this all my life—namely myself. However much I might dislike my own cowardice or conceit or greed, I went on loving myself. There had never been the slightest difficulty about it. In fact the very reason why I hated these things was that I loved the man. Because I loved myself, I was sorry to find that I was the sort of man who did those things.”*⁵
- **So, you confront the person about their wrong, but** without the slightest drop of malice or desire to make them pay for what they did. The confrontation should not feel like a venting of frustration or an execution of justice, but an invitation to fellowship.
 - Jesus **had the best illustration** for this (though, admittedly, many are confused by it) **Matthew 5:39: “If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other one also.”** People ask, “What does that mean, someone is physically attacking you and so you stand there and just keep taking it? Turned both cheeks... now what? Out of facial cheeks, so what? Bend over?” The person hitting your cheek is not trying to kill you. No school of martial arts tells you to go for the cheek... the face in Jewish thought is relationship. For a Jew, having your

cheek slapped is an insult. So, when it happens, you have three choices: **1. You can strike back, go for their cheek.** That is being overcome by evil. It is controlling you. **2. You can offer them the same cheek.** Passive aggressive. Start to punish the person in small ways: silent treatment, or you quit calling them. Take it and take it and take it until you finally lose control and explode at the person. Just take it and take it and take it until you feel no more love for the person with no desire to be around them. **3. Turn the other cheek: turn to them the other side of your face, in an attempt to re-establish the relationship.** You’re not going for their cheek; you’re also not just ignoring the evil in them... you are doing whatever it takes to re-establish the relationship. Doesn’t mean you ignore the evil in them. Quite the contrary! Part of turning the new cheek to them is confronting the evil in them. But you are doing it with the aim of restoring the relationship! Loving anger is always focused on eliminating the sin while drawing close the person. It should feel like an invitation to fellowship, not an execution of vengeance.⁶

B. Loving anger is short-lived (vs. 26)

- Whether or not the sun goes down on your wrath is a test of whether it is selfish or loving.
 - **Loving anger** is short-lived. You confront the person for the wrong and then commit the injustice to God and let him deal with it—and then you can go to sleep an unburdened person and the sun has not gone down on your wrath.
 - **Selfish anger** is what stays with you! You mull over the injustice and the hurt and let it simmer.
 - **When my wife and I got married**, we tried to put the **“Don’t let the sun go down on your anger”** into practice and so we were like, “Let’s never go to bed until we have

⁵ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 117.

⁶ (Note here: that means potentially removing yourself from an abusive situation. You are not just taking it. Turning the other cheek implies confrontation, or dealing with the wrong.)

everything resolved.” And **all that did was just to lead us** to a few sleepless nights.

- **Because here was the problem:** We would try to talk about whatever the issue was, but even after we did, I would still be angry b/c she didn't see it my way, or I felt like she wasn't sorry enough—I didn't get the tearful confession; her weeping at my feet telling me what an awesome husband I was and how lucky she was to have me that I felt like I deserved.) And vice versa.
- This **verse is not talking so much about resolving all your issues before you go to bed** (thought that's good); it's talking about an attitude you take into your disagreements—I don't have to carry the **burden of settling the score** or even **getting her to see things my way. I can confront the wrong**; then I go to bed and leave vengeance, and her, to God.
- **How long your anger lasts reveals whether it is selfish** anger concerned about vengeance or if it is loving anger concerned with the other person.
- **Jesus's anger in the Gospels was always short-lived.**
 - **Here's how we know:** In **Matthew 21**, right after he drove the moneychangers out the Temple, with whips, **vs. 14** says the lame and the sick came *to him*. **Right after this expression of anger, the vulnerable flocked to him.** They weren't like, “**Oh, stay away from Jesus...**” He is **In. A. Mood**. He zapped 5 fig trees on the way into the Temple this afternoon. He was so mad that when he walked by the Food Court he turned everyone's wine back into water.” No. His anger was focused and short-lived.
 - So, **the vulnerable flocked to him**. Is that what happens right after you are angry?

Which leads to...

C. Loving anger is controlled (vs. 31)

- When he tells us to ³¹ **Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice, he's talking about avoiding that state where you feel consumed by anger—whether that comes out aggressively through shouting or passively through slander...**
- **Loving anger develops slowly.**
- The **book of Proverbs** says a lot about anger, and **this might be its main counsel: *It doesn't counsel “no anger,” but slow anger.***
 - **“A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.” (Prov 29:11)** (Your friend calls, “I just need to vent.” Say, “proceed, fool”.) Try it?
 - **“He who is slow to anger is better than the **mighty**” (Prov 16:32)**
- Proverbs tells us that getting angry quickly rarely has a good effect:
 - **“An angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins.” (Prov 29:22)**
 - Or in the book of James, the NT equivalent to Proverbs, James says, **“Be slow to anger... for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God.” (James 1:20)**
- **Rather than quick and reflexive outbursts, it **counsels us** to respond with patience and gentleness:**
 - **“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (Prov 15:1).**
 - **“It is to one's glory to overlook an offense.” (Prov 19:11)** Sometimes the best thing to do with a wrong done to you is let it go—that is your glory and will diffuse a lot of anger. Probably **80% of the rude things your spouse says** to you in marriage you don't need to respond to or confront.

Loving anger is controlled and slowly-developing. This is what God is like. **Throughout the Bible, God is repeatedly described as being**

“slow to anger.”⁷ I’ve told you that in Hebrew our phrase “slow to anger” is actually written “long of nostrils.” Which is **confusing, at first**, because you ask, “How **do big noses indicate slowness to anger?**” Well, what happens when you get angry? Your nostrils flare. If you’re quick-tempered, your flaring nostrils get going right away. Soon you’re like a bull, raring to charge. But what do you do if you’re trying to control your anger? Well, you close your mouth and breathe deeply through your nose slowly... while you say some serenity phrase to yourself like “goosfraba.”

You say,

- ~~“Well, **how do I know when it is better to just let it go or when I need to respond because that person is doing long term damage to themselves and our relationship?**”~~
- ~~Or, **how do I know when my anger is more selfish or loving?**~~
Great questions. All I’ll say here is that you should approach **these questions in community!** Others can usually see these things more clearly.
- ~~(**With depression and anxiety**, you typically know if it is bothering you. But if you have an anger issue, everyone else around you knows it before you do.)~~

Conclusion / Music

So, what Paul has done is shown us the difference in selfish and loving anger and showed us how to develop loving anger and rid ourselves of selfish anger.

Let me close with one, final thought: The world would be such a better place, and your relationships would be so much better, if you would start living this way. But it would also lead to real freedom for you.

⁷ E.g. Exodus 34:6

- Bitterness does far more damage to your heart than it does to whomever you are mad at.
- I’ve heard that nursing unforgiveness is like **trying to hurt someone by drinking a cup of poison** yourself!
- **Nursing bitterness and resentment gives** Satan the tool he needs, as Paul says, to destroy your heart.

A few years ago, I read a book called *The Bishop of Rwanda*. It was written by a Rwandan pastor named John Rucyhana—a Tutsi—who lived through the genocides in Rwanda. His people were the ones that were systematically hunted down, raped, murdered and oppressed by the Hutus. When they finally achieved peace, he was one of leaders who was in charge of bringing healing to the country. He, a Tutsi who had suffered unspeakable tragedies, said one of the most destructive lies that Satan uses to destroy our lives is that we **must wait until the person who wronged us properly repents before we forgive**. Jesus didn’t do that, he said. He forgave from the cross. Forgiveness, he explained, is more about releasing *you* from the bitterness.⁸

Getting rid of resentment and bitterness is more about your relationship with God than it is your relationship with the other person.

When you are forgive you are not saying that what they did was not that bad, and **you are not letting them off the hook...** just acknowledging that it is not your hook!

And that is FREEDOM! Some of you have **harbored bitterness for so long it is just eating you away like a cancer!**

- You’ve become an angry person.
- **And a lot of what you are angry about** can’t find any resolution!
Right? *How can you pay your 25 yr old son back for not being*

⁸ “The evil of the genocides were one thing, and they were demonic; but just as difficult is learning to overcome the driving and demonic desire to get even--to take vengeance--on those who hurt you.”

*there for him when he was a child? How can your parents fully pay you back? **They can't!** And if that's the condition to get over your bitterness you'll never get over it!*

- YOU ARE A PRISONER!!!
- *How long are you going to allow people you don't even like—people who are no longer in your life, maybe even people who aren't even alive anymore—to control your life?⁹*

You've got to stop living in the past, and nursing hurt and telling sad stories... and take responsibility attitude.

- I'm not trying to minimize your pain or so it wasn't that bad... just saying that some of you are **captive to that bitterness** and **there is a way out**... and this is it!
- You are **going to have trust in the sovereignty of God** and **his promise ultimately to take care of all vengeance**... and **trust in his sufficiency to make up** in your life for how that person harmed you.

Peter once asked Jesus... How many times should I forgive? 7? I wonder what Peter was thinking about, and what number the person was on? "They are on 6!" 2 more and...

- Jesus's response: 70x7! He didn't mean that at 491 it was open season. He meant infinitely. (7, you see, is the number of completion—but so is 10. And then Jesus tacks on another 7 exponential for good measure. He's saying that we should forgive (in Jen Wilkin's words) "completely times completely, with an extra dash of completely thrown in.)
- Because forgiveness is more about you than it is about righting the wrong. **God will right the wrong.** You can trust him for that.

Receive forgiveness

Trust in God's sovereignty

Extend forgiveness—and ask for it?

⁹ Andy Stanley, "Enemies of the Heart—Anger"

