

ARE YOU SERIOUS
“I’m Mad: The Fruit of Unforgiveness”
October 22, 2023

INTRO.: I was 15 years old and, believe it or not, I was a little over 5 feet tall and weighed less than 100 pounds when I was preparing to head to Philmont Scout Ranch and hike in the Rocky Mountains with several other scouts. We had several training meetings leading up to our trip. There had been other Scouts in my troop who went to Philmont and it had become a dream and a goal for me. I had gone on many hikes and campouts as a scout so I had a fair amount of experience. One summer our troop hiked 50 miles to Scout camp but I had never hiked in the Rocky Mountains. Being the size I was physically it was crucial that my pack be as light as possible. There would be no room for anything not absolutely essential. One of the nights of training we had to come with our backpacks packed and they were weighed. Nobody wanted to carry any unnecessary weight. Hebrews 12 speaks of unnecessary weight that believers cannot afford to carry.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

The writer doesn’t just tell us to get rid of our sin but gives us instruction as to our aim and goal in this journey of life.

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes (present tense participle) on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For the last several weeks we have been going through a series of forgiveness entitled, **ARE YOU SERIOUS**. We have talked about:

- *How forgiveness is Inconceivable apart from God
- *What forgiveness is and what it isn’t
- *Why should I forgive
- *When should I forgive
- *How does forgiveness work

This week we are starting the second half of the series: **THE FRUITS OF UNFORGIVENESS**. Unforgiveness is like carrying extra weight around that makes life hard to navigate and causes a great deal of pain and hurt to myself and to others. There are three fruits of unforgiveness that we are going to look at: anger, gossip, and bitterness. These three are interrelated and can develop at the same time. How many here have been hurt by somebody’s anger directed at you? How many here have responded in anger to another? Where is the first place we find anger between people mentioned in the Bible?

Genesis 4:2–5 Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. **3** In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. **4** But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, **5** but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Cain was not happy with his offering to the Lord not being accepted. He is described as being very angry. God gives him a warning.

Genesis 4:6–7 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? **7** If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.”

Cain is angry with his brother and what is Cain’s solution?

Genesis 4:8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

He was so mad that he killed his brother. Was it his brother’s fault that God didn’t accept Cain’s offering? This particular incident is not a case of unforgiveness because Abel had done nothing wrong but what is our natural reaction when someone’s actions or words have wounded us? What is our natural reaction when someone has sinned against us? What are some of the problems that can come about because of my anger?

Four things were going to look at this morning related to anger:

WORDS USED IN THE BIBLE

WHEN IS IT RIGHT

WARNINGS IN THE BIBLE

WHAT DO I DO

We will concentrate on Ephesians 4:25-32 and mention several others which I encourage you to read over and meditate on during the week. Paul has just told the believers in Ephesus that they are to put off the old self and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. When someone comes to faith in Jesus the Holy Spirit takes up residence in them and their life should change. The goal now is to become more like Jesus which we can't do without God's help and strength. Let's read this passage together.

Ephesians 4:25-32 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

WORDS USED IN THE BIBLE

In the English language we say things like: they ticked me off, I'm furious, I'm steamed, I'm boiling mad, I'm angry, I'm enraged, I'm incensed, I'm livid, I'm infuriated to name a few. In the passage we just read there are several words related to anger.

All the words I'm going to mention are found in Ephesians 4:31.

Ephesians 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

"get rid of:" *command*

The following taken from John MacArthur

"bitterness:" (*pikria*) reflects a smoldering resentment, a brooding grudge-filled attitude.

"rage:" (*qumov*) passion, rage

"anger:" (*orgh*) more internal smoldering, a subtle and deep feeling. This is one of the main characteristics of the Greek gods.

"brawling or clamor:" (*kraukh*): is the shout or outcry of strife and reflects the public outburst that reveals loss of control.

"slander:" (*blasphemia*) ongoing defamation of someone that rises from a bitter heart

"malice:" (*kakia*) general term for evil that is the root of all vices

John Phillips: What an ugly accumulation of human characteristics! They sour our lives, scald our brethren, stain our characters, spoil our testimonies, and sadden the Holy Spirit. Nothing could be more grieving to the Holy Spirit than a bitter, resentful spirit.

This is a similar list that we find in Colossians 3

Colossians 3:8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

There are certainly different layers of anger: some deeper than others. Is all anger wrong?

WHEN IT IS RIGHT

Ephesians 4:26-27 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

The first part of this verse is a command. There are some things that should make us angry. What might those things be? Did Jesus ever become angry?

How about when Jesus went into the synagogue and there was a man with a shriveled hand there and all the religious leaders were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus. They wanted to see if Jesus would heal this man on the Sabbath. Jesus knew what they were thinking.

Mark 3:3–5 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.” **4** Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. **5** He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.

When Jesus came into Jerusalem and entered the temple courts He drove out those who were taking advantage of the people and making a profit by selling animals for sacrifice and changing people’s money. Note Jesus’ response:

Mark 11:15–17 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, **16** and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. **17** And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

What are some things that would bring about God’s anger? Sin is definitely one of those. We can observe this in both the Old and New Testaments. God hates sin and cannot just turn His head and pretend it’s not happening. Our sin caused Jesus’ death on the cross. As we look at society today, I am sure there are some things that cause God’s anger. How about the taking of life of the unborn? Or how about the sex slave trade of defenseless women?

F.W. Robertson wrote in one of his letters of when he once met a certain man who was trying to lure a young girl into prostitution he became so angry that he bit his lip until it bled.

John MacArthur, “Jesus was always angered when the Father was maligned or when others were mistreated, but He was never selfishly angry at what was done against Him. That is the measure of righteous anger.... Anger that is sin, on the other hand, is anger that is self-defensive and self-serving, that is resentful of what is done against oneself. It is the anger that leads to murder and to God’s judgment.

Yet, even with the right reasons for anger it can slip into sinful anger. So, Paul gives a warning. I want us to look at his warning and other warnings in Scripture.

WARNINGS IN THE BIBLE

Ephesians 4:26-27 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

Apparently my and your anger can turn into something that is sinful. Anger is a natural response when we or a loved one have been wounded by another.

“Do not let the sun go down on your anger.”

This is in the form of a command. Paul knew that if we let anger fester in our heart and soul there would be problems. When we let it go, our anger can stew and we can begin to be consumed by it. It can cause us to want to seek revenge or to harm others in different ways. When this happens:

“do not give the devil a foothold”

“do not give:” This is a present tense command! We provide the devil an opportunity to worm his way into our lives and cause division when we let anger fester. This leads to gossip and bitterness, the other two fruits of unforgiveness we will cover in the coming weeks.

“foothold:” a place

Wuest: “any portion of space marked off from the surrounding territory. Here it is used in the sense of opportunity, power, occasion for acting.”

Max Anders, “When we allow our anger to become sin or when we allow ourselves to keep our anger for more than a day, it gives the devil an opportunity to gain control over our attitudes, our actions, and our relationships. It gives him a **foothold** to lead us into greater anger and more sin.

Our anger NEVER gets better when we allow it to go unchecked! It's like a campfire that is allowed to continue to smolder unattended when there are dry and windy conditions. It is a perfect recipe for a forest fire. How many times has something relatively small turned into a very divisive and contentious thing? It has split churches, caused family splits where people refuse to talk for years and maybe a lifetime, and sometimes led to irreparable damage and harm to both parties.

Anger can devour (picture of animals fighting)

Anger can explode and spew over everyone (picture of volcano)

Anger can be a raging fire (picture of a fire)

Anger can be a harsh or mean spirit (picture of angry bird)

The Word of God is so practical and God knew that this is something we would struggle with because it comes so naturally. Let's take a few moments and look at some other warnings in the Bible. What is a good book in the Bible to read about this topic?

Proverbs 14:17 A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated.

Proverbs 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 27:4 Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?

Proverbs 29:8 Mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger.

Proverbs 29:11 A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.

Proverbs 29:22 An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.

Proverbs 30:33 For as churning the milk produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife."

Psalm 4:4 In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent. Selah

Psalm 37:8 Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.

Okay, Pastor, I get it. I just have one question:

WHAT DO I DO

If responding in anger and continuing to be angry is a natural response, what chance do I have to get over being angry? I stand ZERO chance in and of myself to let go of my anger!!

Let's go back to Ephesians 4, the end of the chapter. As I said earlier this is a chapter contrasting the old man (prior to Christ) with the new man (after coming to faith). What is Paul's substitute for anger?

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

"be:" present tense command

"kind:" benevolent, gracious, kind (Wuest)

"compassionate:" tender-hearted (Wuest)

Are you serious, pastor? Look at the Apostle Paul:

1 Corinthians 4:12–13 We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; **13** when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.

"forgiving:" to do a favor to, do something agreeable or pleasant to one, to show one's self gracious, benevolent, to forgive in the sense of treating the offending party graciously (Wuest)

"just as in Christ God forgave (past tense) you:" our forgiveness by God has been accomplished! Past, present, and future sins.

God's goal for our lives is that we be conformed to the image of Christ. This will not be an easy process!!

Psalm 86:15 But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

Psalm 103:8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

Psalm 145:8 The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.

We are called not to react in the same manner as what has been done to us. This is supernatural!

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

*Take my eyes off myself and put them on God

*Spend time in the Word of God

James 1:19–20 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, **20** for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

"take note:" to know, to understand

"be:" present tense command

*Might need help on the journey

*Keep the circle small

SO WHAT???

Hiker Learns to Discard Non-Essentials

Every year, about 1500 "thru-hikers" set out to walk the entire Appalachian Trail in a single season. Only 10 percent complete the 2,160 miles of challenging terrain stretching from Georgia to Maine. One reason some people drop out early is that they haven't learned to travel light.

A friend of mine launched his thru-hike carrying a seriously overloaded backpack. He had an audio player loaded with bird calls, an air pistol to keep the varmints away, a camera, a radio, and an alarm clock. "If it ran on batteries," he said, "I had one in my pack."

At his first stop, an experienced hiker helped him go through his pack and decide what to keep and what to send home. Each item was placed on a gram scale with the question, "Is it worth it? Do you want to carry this for the next 2,000 miles?"

My friend discovered that his biggest problem was an accumulation of little things. Most of his extra weight was in ounces, not pounds. He didn't need half of what was in his first-aid kit nor the extra tube of toothpaste. His heavy multi-tool knife was replaced with one weighing only an ounce. A metal knife-fork-and-spoon set gave way to a single plastic spoon. He sent home 26 pounds of unnecessary weight.

How many of us are trying to walk the trail of faith in Christ weighed down by an accumulation of things? Some of these might be an accumulation of possessions, our worldly habits, expensive hobbies, or sins, such as anger, bitterness, grudges, or lust. Instead of enjoying the beauty of life with Jesus, we complain about how hard it is to follow him. What do you need to unload today?

Source: Editor, "Thru Hikers," HousetoHouse.com (Accessed 3/9/22)

When we hold onto things, we are told to let go of we take the place of God and allow Satan a foot into the door of our heart, mind, and soul. We are paralyzed and unable to respond as directed in Roman 12:17-21.

Romans 12:17–21 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. **18** If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. **19** Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. **20** On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

*What am I carrying around that I need to give to God?

*Have I come to know the author of forgiveness?

*What Scripture concerning anger am I going to commit to memory?