



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Be Angry and Do Not Sin

GOD'S HOPE FOR THE HURTING

Ephesians 4:26–27, 31–32

Philip Chapman | July 18, 2021

Good morning. My name is Phil Chapman and I have the privilege of serving as the Connections Pastor here at the Sugar Grove campus. I also have the opportunity to be the online campus pastor, so many of you have probably seen me on the online service. I don't get to see you much during that, but I do appreciate your attendance. I love to see your faces right here and in person.

Today we're going to continue in a sermon series that we have titled, "Help!" This is not help from our neighbors, friends or even a brother or sister in Christ, but help from God Almighty. Today we're going to focus on anger.

It was 1992. I was a senior in high school, playing soccer and found myself jamming my big toe on my right foot multiple times. As a high school kid, it really wasn't a big deal. I just rolled with it. But as time went on, every time my big toe would get bumped or stepped on—usually by one of my children—it would hurt big time. Well, I kind of let it go, then almost 30 years later, my heel on the same foot started hurting. In fact, the pain was so bad that at times I had to take my shoe off in order to ease the pain a little bit. I finally succumbed and went to the foot doctor. He did x-rays, came into the exam room, then said, "Phil, you need to have surgery." I said, "On my heel?" "No, on your big toe."

All those years before, when I injured my big toe, bone started growing in the joint to compensate. Well, after 28+ years, a lot of unwanted bone was where my joint used to be. The heel problem was that I had developed plantar fasciitis, because my big toe wasn't moving. So to resolve the issue, the doctor needed to cut out all the unwanted bone in the joint, let that heal, then put in an artificial joint.

Today, I want to talk about how my experience with my big toe is very similar to what happens with us when we have unresolved anger. If we continue to let anger go and not resolve it, it's very similar to my toe. The pain is going to move to other parts of the body. It's going to start to affect those around us. Maybe if we get bumped into, we're going to start lashing out at them. Eventually the pain is going to get unbearable.

Perhaps it's a parent who abandoned you when you were younger, or a sibling you got in a fight with. Maybe it's a spouse you've had an issue with. Or someone molested you when you were younger. Maybe it was that coach that caused your kid to hate sports. Maybe it's your boss who just never gets off your back.

Anger pops up throughout our lives and is something that is absolutely crucial for us to understand. In fact, I believe it's vital for us to know exactly what God wants us to do and how to respond to anger. Depending on our response, there are going to be a couple different outcomes.

We're going to go through a lot of different Scriptures today, but we'll find ourselves landing in Ephesians 4. We're going to hit four different verses there: 26, 27, 31 and 32. So let me read this passage, starting with verse 26:

²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil... ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.



Understanding anger

The first thing we need to understand is what anger is.

Anger says you owe me.

Anger says, "You owe me something." Think about it. Most of the time when you're angry, you're telling somebody they owe you something. That person who cut you off on your way to work, they owe you an apology and maybe more. The people who robbed your home and stole your stuff owe you a lot. You were violated. That boss who fired you when you were 28 years old owes you money; that unemployment was hard.

Perhaps it's as simple as two children. One has a big cookie; one has a much smaller cookie. The kid with the smaller cookie says, "You owe me. You owe me more cookie."

Anger says, "You owe me."

Anger is found in you and me.

Anger is found in each one of us. Most of us struggle with anger in some fashion every single day. Many times we justify our anger. "I should be angry at you. Look what you did!" Some of us get angry at the grocery store, at the work place, maybe even at the baseball game. Some of us get angry at church, because of the songs that have been chosen. Or maybe it's too hot in here, or too cold. Do you know what one of the most prominent places is where we get angry? In our homes with those we love the most.

The other day I was running late. I left the house, then realized I had forgotten something. I called up Reggie, my 13-year-old son and said, "Reggie, I'm coming home. I'm going to pull in the driveway and I need you to run outside and bring me this item I forgot." So, Reggie, happy as can be, came running outside, smiling, bringing me the item I had forgotten, and I got angry at him. Why? Well, two hours earlier it had rained outside, the grass was all wet, there was mud on the ground, and because he was hustling, he ran outside without socks or shoes. I was thinking, "Aw, Reggie, you owe me an explanation. How are you going to dry your feet off when you get back inside? You're going to go through the whole house all wet." I got angry with him.

You see, anger just pops up all the time in random places, for no apparent reason. Anger says, "You owe me." Anger is found in all of us in some fashion.

Anger can be righteous because of what you did to me.

But did you know that anger can be righteous? We see that in the life of Jesus, in Mark 3. The Pharisees were all upset at Jesus because of He was doing stuff on the Sabbath. Jesus was going to heal a lame man. They came to Him and said, "You can't heal him." Well, what did Jesus say? Mark 3:5 records it: *"And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was restored."*

Jesus was angry at the money changers. Remember that? He was flipping the tables. Righteous anger. Psalm 7:11 talks about God being an angry God. Yet at the same time, in that same verse, we see that God is righteous in His anger.

What about us? Can we be angry in a way that is righteous? Well, Paul says it in the verses we're talking about today. *"Be angry and do not sin..."* So he's obviously saying we can be angry without sinning. How about being angry at the person who molested you? Is that righteous anger? Sure; obviously. How about the people who broke into your home and stole your stuff? Yeah, you can be angry about that. What about the killing of innocent babies? Or finding out that in the next town there's a kid who has been tortured for the last couple years. Or even reading about the holocaust. Yes, yes and yes. All righteous anger situations. When your anger is revealing an injustice, according to God's Word, it is most likely righteous anger.

One author put it this way: "Anger is an appropriate response to suppress truth, to immoral living and the rejection of God's will." It signals that something has been broken and needs to be fixed. You can be justified in your anger. You can have appropriate anger. But you need to be very careful, because it is a slippery slope.

Responding to anger

The Bible teaches us many ways we are to respond when we are angry.

The Bible teaches to put away all anger.

Wait a minute; what? Didn't I just tell you that Paul said, "Be angry and do not sin"? So that should be okay. Why is he now saying to put away all anger? It's because Paul doesn't just stop at verse 26. When he's writing this letter to the Ephesians, he knows they are all very new believers. They had been in the practice of stealing, lying and saying bad words to other people—and of being angry. So Paul is trying to teach them. He's saying, "Hey, you are new creations in Christ. You're brand new. You are not like your old self. So you need to put away all anger."

The other day I was mowing my lawn. I've got two or three acres of grass to mow, plus a wooded area in this one section. I was driving along, ducked under a branch where a spider web had fully grown between the ground and the branch. I was just covered in spider web.

What do you think I did? I started grabbing that spider web, throwing it off, getting rid of it, while the mower is still moving. I was putting it away. That's what Paul is saying here. "Do it crazily. Grab it and throw it. Get rid of it. Put away all anger." So Paul goes through a whole list of things he wants them to put away. Stop stealing. Stop using their mouth to bring others down. Then Ephesians 4:31 says to put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander and malice.

You see, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ—if you trust that Jesus lived an absolutely perfect life that He went to the cross to forgive your sins and then He was raised again on the third day—you are a new creation. You can put away anger. And that includes righteous anger. The Scripture we're focused on says, "*Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.*" Why? Because if we have anger—even righteous anger—and we let it linger too long, our anger is going to turn into sinful anger, which obviously is counterproductive to God's Kingdom.

The Bible teaches to put forgiveness into practice.

The Bible teaches you and me to put away all anger and it also teaches us to put forgiveness into practice. The last verse says it well: "*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*" Instead of being angry at people, instead of stealing from them or even speaking harsh words, just be kind. My wife has a shirt that says, "Just be kind." Be tenderhearted.

Most importantly, forgive one another which mimics what our God does for us. If there is an antidote for anger, it would be forgiveness. This is really, really hard sometimes. Sometimes it's super easy. When I was angry with Reggie, the Holy Spirit convicted me before I got out of the driveway. I called him up and apologized. But other times it is super hard to forgive somebody.

In 1958, my wife's grandmother was cleaning the dishes in her home in Platteville, Illinois. All of a sudden there was a knock at the door. She wiped her hands on her apron, walked over to the door, opened it and standing there was a police officer with his hat off. He was there to inform Grandma that her nine-year-old daughter, Kakki, had just been killed, along with her nine-year-old friend, as they were riding their bikes by a drunk driver. How in the world could Grandma Hutchinson ever forgive that drunk driver?

You see, sometimes forgiveness is super easy. We're angry at somebody, but we can forgive them pretty quickly when we realize we were the fool in the process. But other times it's real hard. This is tough stuff. That's when we need to go to the Bible. That's why we learn from the Bible. In Matthew 18, Jesus gives an excellent story to help us understand what forgiveness really is. You see, Jesus loves taking complex situations and simplifying them with His Word.

In this case, the apostle Peter comes to Jesus and he's all excited. He's figured it out. He says, "Okay, Jesus. If our brother sins against us, how many times should we forgive him? Seven times?" That's a big number for Peter to come up with. Jesus looks at him, maybe smiles and says, "No, Peter, not seven times, but 77 times." Then Jesus looks at the other apostles and tells them a story. We call it a parable. I'm going to read this from Matthew 18, starting in verse 23:

²³ "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and

children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

This is unbelievable forgiveness. If this servant has a thousand years to live, he will never get close to paying back what he owes the master. So he begs for forgiveness and the king gives him forgiveness because he has mercy. He doesn't have to give up his wife. He doesn't have to give up his kids. He doesn't have to give up his possessions. His debt is forgiven.

You see, that's what forgiveness is. It's not when you require payment for something that is owed. Think about that neighbor lady who talks mean to you all the time. She talks behind your back to all the other neighbors. She owes you an apology. She needs to go make right her wrongs. But we're to offer mercy. We're to offer forgiveness.

Jesus continues the story, beginning in verse 28:

²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

The master has righteous anger and so does the Father. Jesus isn't telling us that we should forgive; He's telling us we need to forgive. We also need to realize He's not just saying, "Forgive and forget." Rather, our forgiveness should be a response to what Jesus has done for us. He covered all our sins through His ultimate and perfect sacrifice. When we forgive someone else, we need to cover them with that exact same grace that Jesus has shown us. This may not just be a one-time occurrence; sometimes we encounter a situation over and over again, so we need to cover it over and over.

By the way, do you realize in Jesus' parable that the king is God and the servant is you...and you...and you...and me? You and I owe so much to God that there is no chance in the world we can ever repay Him. Our bank accounts cannot pay for it. Our service cannot pay for it. Our prayer life, whether fake or real, cannot pay for it. The number of times we come to church cannot pay for it. We could work and work and work and work and we still will not be able to pay for it. That's the beauty of the grace of God.

When we go to God and beg for His mercy—even though we owe Him so much—He's gracious and will provide forgiveness. Likewise, when someone owes you an apology or something big, you don't need to go up and choke them. You need to take them to God and offer the same mercy. We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We all need forgiveness. None of us are worthy of the forgiveness of God, but He provides it anyway.

The Bible teaches to put it in the hands of God.

The Bible teaches us that we're to put away all anger and to put forgiveness into practice. The Bible also teaches us to put our anger and our offender in the hands of God. Romans 12:19 says, "*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.'*" This verse is telling us that we can truly trust that God will deal with all the wrongdoing against us. He will avenge it. It's not for us to be angry about. That's hard, because in our minds something needs to be repaid. Something needs to be dealt with. "How could I not lash out at that person? Do you not understand, Phil, what they did to me?"

You feel as though you need justice. You feel that if you don't do it, no one else will. That's what we tell ourselves about the small things and the huge ones. God tells us something very different. He tells us in the Bible that God always, always knows what happened and He will always repay.

Now, His repayment may come in the form of eternal repayment or His payment may come in complete forgiveness. Either way, the Bible is clear that we are not to hold on to our anger, but we are to lay it in the hands of God and let Him deal with it. Nor is the Bible teaching us to rejoice over knowing that our enemies are going to be dealt with. Matthew 5:44 actually tells us to love our enemies and pray for them. We're to pray for the ones who are persecuting you? What? That's what the Bible teaches us. So put away all anger. Put forgiveness into practice. Then in the end, just simply lay it in the hands of God.

Outcomes of anger

Depending on how we handle the situation, there are going to be a couple different outcomes.

If we continue our anger, we will become bitter.

If we allow anger to take root in our hearts, we will soon see that our lives will be bitter, not only toward the individual that caused us to become angry, but toward those around us as well. If you're angry at someone or something, sometimes your kids will get too close and you take your anger out on them too.

I like how John Piper defines bitterness: "Bitterness is an unforgiving, resentful, antagonistic spirit toward someone for being wronged." Friends, we're in a battle against all bitterness. If we don't learn how to forgive other people, we will lose this battle. If we can't learn to forgive, then like Jesus said in His parable, God cannot forgive us. You see, I'm not teaching salvation by works; this is a matter of your heart.

When I was at the doctor's office and he told me I had to have surgery, I could have completely ignored it. He showed me the x-rays and compared it with the x-ray of my good foot. He even pushed on the injured part where he said I needed to have surgery and it was painful. I could have just said, "Oh, wow, that's interesting, Doctor. Thanks for the input, but no thanks. I'm not having surgery." What would the outcome be? I wouldn't find healing, and I'd be dealing with pain the rest of my life.

It's the exact same way with the Great Physician. He has prescribed, as our verse says—along with Colossians 3:8—that we are to get rid of all anger, wrath, malice, slander and obscene talk. God is very clear that we are to put away anger.

Are you willing to listen to the greatest doctor ever? Our Great Physician, Jesus Christ, our Savior, was on the cross. In His last breath, what was He saying? About the people who murdered Him, who hammered nails into Him, He said, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34).

If we continue our anger, we will become bitter.

If we cease our anger, through the help of God, we will start to get better.

When we learn to forgive those who cause us to be angry, we're going to start a healing process. This could be long and hard, but it is necessary. With the help of God, we can get on the path toward honoring the Lord even when we're angry.

By the way, I did have the surgery and have been recovering now for about two months. I still have some swelling and can't fit into some of my shoes. I'm also getting therapy multiple times a week, because when I fully heal, I want to be able to thrive. That's also what we need to do with anger in our lives.

Here's an application for you. Make a list of everyone and everything that has ever made you angry and that you haven't dealt with. Go all the way back to your youngest memories. Is there something out there that has made you angry? Identify all the times when where you've been angry. . Whether it's been five decades, five years or five days ago, make the list. Perhaps you were angry with something this morning. Write it down. I did this too, friends. I went through this process and it was extremely helpful.

Then deal with it, one by one. Take each situation, each individual, to the Lord. Take it to the King. Don't take it to the individual person necessarily. If it happened five decades ago, they may not even realize it. Take it to the King because He knows everything. It's your healing you need to deal with. As you go through this process, there are going to be some things that take longer. Maybe you're reminded about it every day because you see a certain individual, or you come across something every single day. That's okay. Just keeping going through it. Sometimes it's going to hurt. Sometimes it's going to be painful. That's okay too.

Our goal, as we go through this process, is to find healing. Maybe you need a brother or sister in Christ to help you along the way. That's great too. You see, in the end, friends, your heart is going to start healing and your life for the Lord will start thriving.