

April 2, 2021  
Good Friday

## Be Angry

May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts be pure and acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our heavenly Father, our Rock and our Salvation, Amen.

Growing up I used to like to listen to KIBS radio in the morning because Paul Harvey was on. I think many of you have heard of Paul Harvey before. You know, 'this is Paul Harvey, Good day.' But one story in particular just really made me smile, if not actually just laugh and roll on the floor. It was a story of a man who was a golfer. He was a quite good golfer but on this particular day, he was having a very bad day, a terrible day. When he got to the 13th hole and had you know hooked the ball like three times. The third time it landed in the pond, he just got furious, and he took that bag of clubs and he just started this whirl around like a discus thrower in the Olympics and chucked the whole thing in the pond and just headed for the parking lot. Well other golfers looked at that and they were whoa, it is bad day. But then they kind of smiled as they saw him come walking back saw him get to the pond, walk in, fish around, find his bag, come out with his bag of clubs and set it on the ground. He opened the pocket, took out his keys, took out his cell phone, picked it back up and did the discus thing again and launched it back into the pond. Paul Harvey's words after that were something like this: "The size of a man can be measured by the size of the things that make him angry."

And so, we come to the seventh of the deadly sins, anger. Or as the Bible often calls it, wrath. I believe it is probably the most obvious of the seven because when someone is angry, you know it. There's the raised voice, harsh words, a scowl, a punch, or worse. As I've done in several of our sermons, let's get a little personal. What makes *you* angry? Then ask yourself this question, what makes God angry? Unfortunately, the answer to those two are not always the same. In fact, I've actually heard people say, 'if wrath or anger is a sin, then God must be a sinner because

we hear over and over in the Bible of God being angry; or 'therefore my wrath rests upon them.'

Tonight, Good Friday is an example of God's wrath, His anger. His wrath, His anger rested on His son. In fact, killed His son. Since we know God is righteous, and God can't sin; then we can logically deduce that not all anger or wrath is bad. It's what we call righteous anger and it's why in one of our scripture readings here tonight, Ephesians 4:26, we hear Saint Paul saying, "be angry but do not sin." When it comes to anger, to wrath, there are two types and the first is righteous anger. In fact, I would contend that God gave us the emotion of anger so that we would have an emotion that would lead us to do something about sin or injustice.

Angry about injustice in society? That anger is supposed to lead us to work to correct the injustice, to bring righteousness, but to do so in a righteous manner. If you think about it, you will probably agree that a person really can't be a Christian if they're not angry right now. When we look at a society that is embracing abortion, even to the point of partial birth abortion, with child abuse running the way it is going, with the racism that we see happening in a variety of areas, sexual perversion going on and just flat-out corruption within the justice system, within the government, and yes even within the church. If you're not angry, it's time to check your spiritual pulse.

We should be angry. God gets angry. If we go to Isaiah chapter 5 verse 25, we read "Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against His people, and He stretched out His hand against them and struck them down and the mountains quaked, and their corpses were refuse in the midst of the streets. For all thus His anger was not turned away and His hand is stretched out still." God gets angry and God's people get angry.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, God had delivered them from the Egyptians with the 10 plagues, delivered them at the Red Sea, provided them with manna and quail. Had given them direction by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. They come to Mount Sinai, God speaks to them they hear God gives the Ten Commandments. They tell Moses, you go up and talk to Him lest we be consumed by God, and so

Moses does, he's up there 40 days 40 nights he comes back down there worshipping a golden calf, and what does he do? He gets angry. Anger, it is a proper human and spiritual mechanism when motivated by faith, rooted in God's word. It becomes sinful when it becomes rooted and motivated by any of the seven deadly sins. Because the result then isn't seeking righteousness but is seeking revenge; revenge against those who have, we believe, harmed us taking advantage of us or maybe have prospered because of us. It always has a negative result.

It impacts us socially. Proverbs 29:11 says, "A fool gives full vent to his anger; but a wise man keeps himself under control." When a person just goes off the rails angry, they end up looking foolish, looking silly, kind of like the guy tossing the golf clubs into the pond. Anger, it has social results, negative results people can see you blow a gasket and not want to be a part of you anymore. Anger also has physical results. Literally, wrath kills and destroys. We can look right away to Cain and Abel. Cain was angry, he took it out on Abel. That is a very negative physical result.

But when you look at the things that we see going on in our society; you probably all have heard of road rage. Somebody gets cut off, or somebody does something while they're driving and another person upsets with them; and they go after them. It was officially put into the Oxford dictionary in 1997 as an accepted term. Road rage, yes, that is sinful anger. I would contend all the protests that we have been seeing whether it's BLM, Antifa, Proud Boys, that thing on the Capital; whatever that was. When peoples' businesses are being destroyed, people are unruly and not following the law, it is wrong. It is wrong anger. In fact, you know what the number one leading reason for homicide in America is? Domestic arguments, people angry with each other. And then there is that physical aspect of very simply. calm down or stroke out. It always has a negative physical component.

It has also got a very negative psychological component. When you are just flat out angry, you don't think straight. So often, when we're not thinking straight, maybe we're thinking of revenge or something else and we end up hurting ourselves. It reminds me of a situation back in the late 1970s going in to the 80s, where there was an individual a younger

gentleman who was very, very, angry at another individual. This individual that he was angry at had a big 4-wheel drive pickup truck that was all decked out and modified and everything like that. He was jealous, he was angry at this guy, and so he got in his car and he thought, 'I'm gonna show this guy,' I'm put a dent in that truck. He took his car and he backed up and rammed right into it, not thinking that that bigger pickup truck is above his car and his car going backwards just kind of went right underneath the engine. And forgetting that his car was a Pinto, which tended to blow up when rear-ended, and so the result was he lost his car. Meanwhile the guy he was mad at, saw this happening, he was in his truck and he just put it in reverse and drove back and watched the Pinto burn. That's why we read in Ecclesiastes 7:9 "Don't be quick to be angry in your heart for anger resides in the bosom of fools."

And finally, anger always has a negative spiritual result. If you are angry, it always causes you to lose joy in Christ. So, how do we deal with it? Thomas Jefferson said, "If you're angry count to 10 before you speak, and if you're real angry count to 100. Mark Twain modified that by saying if your real angry, count to four. If you're very angry swear. Today we have become much more advanced. You can go on Amazon there are 250,000 self-help books on how to control anger.

The answer is not in counting to 10 or 100 or 4 or swearing or in a self-help book. The answer is in the cross and Jesus hanging there and praying, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Jesus had done nothing wrong. If there was anyone who was justified to have righteous anger, it was Jesus, at that moment. In fact, I would contend probably even justified for Him to have non-righteous anger. But instead, He asked for God to forgive them.

It's that kind of forgiveness that was in Cory Ten Boom, a Christian, Dutch, watchmaker; author of The Hiding Place. In World War Two, she and her family hid the Jews, to help them escape from Nazism. They were betrayed by a neighbor, and arrested. The result was she lost her father, lost her sister, lost nesting in the prison camps; but she forgave her captors. Even when one of them came face to face with her, she said and I quote, "Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and handcuffs hate."

This is why Paul writes in Ephesians 4:26-27, “In your anger, do not sin.” In other words, handle your anger righteously. Then he gives us one more instruction that I think is so important and so often overlooked. He continues and says, “Do not let the sun go down on your anger.” In other words, ‘deal with it righteously, deal with it now and deal with it before hurts emerge and you're tempted to have unrighteous anger. Then remember, as we seek forgiveness and offer forgiveness; forgiveness bears no grudges.

Which takes us back to the cross. You see God's wrath and you see Christ's example of forgiveness. He did not bear a grudge against His Father and He did not bear a grudge against those who were unjustly torturing Him to death. He forgave them, prayed for them and He took their sin, and our sin on Him. He carried those sins to the cross, they were buried with Him in the tomb, and they were left there when He rose.

This Good Friday, let's focus on forgiveness. True forgiveness like Christ's doesn't bear grudges. Let's forgive others for their sins, leave them buried with Jesus, in His tomb and let's not try to resurrect their sin and use it against them.

In our Savior's Name, Amen.