

Ephesians 4 - Part 1

by Robert F. Adcock

The sermon emphasizes the importance of righteous anger and the Christian's call to live in holiness while confronting sin in the world.

Duration: 38:15

Scripture: Acts 17:6, Ephesians 4:17-19, Ephesians 4:25-27, Ephesians 4:31-32, Colossians 3:8, Colossians 3:13

Topics: "Christian Living", "Righteousness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of taking a stand for God in the world we live in. He encourages Christians to make their lives count for God and to boldly speak out against sin without compromising. The preacher also emphasizes the need for believers to show kindness, forgiveness, and love towards one another, just as God has forgiven them through Christ. He urges the audience to put off their old sinful ways and be renewed in their minds and spirits, living in righteousness and holiness. The sermon concludes with a reminder that the time is short and that believers should strive to have a clear conscience and preserve righteousness, as the rapture of the church and the end times could happen at any moment.

Transcript

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart, who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus, that ye put off concerning the former manner of life, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Be ye angry, and send not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God by whom ye are sealed unto

the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice.

Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. And shall we bow now in a word of prayer? Our Father in Heaven, we bow in thy presence and thank thee for this day, and we acknowledge that this is a day that you have made. Help us to rejoice in this day, a day of your wonderful glorious grace.

And we do pray that hearts around this world today will be tenderly inclined to receive Jesus Christ, your Son, as our Lord and Savior. We pray that the time that we spend together as those that are interested in thy holy word and this message that we can have for our souls, that will indeed enrich our lives and better prepare us to serve thee, that under the guidance of the Spirit of God we shall be right-directed, and that each one in his own soul will be responsive to these things, to the end that Jesus Christ, our Lord, might receive all the glory and all the honor. For this we ask in his precious name.

Amen. Now what we've read this morning we will continue to take a look at this evening. And so I would encourage you, if your interest in the subject is aroused, to come back tonight and we'll pursue it a little further and think about it in a little different light.

I'd like for you to think this morning about the stirring and the moving of your emotions as a Christian. So often we think of the Christian, especially the Christian life, as being one in which we demonstrate a very loving and gracious attitude toward anything and everything that touches our lives. And it seems so foreign when we read in the word of God, spoken by man that we believe to have been a very gracious man, a preacher of righteousness.

I believe that there was only one way whereby men might be justified and made right in the presence of God, and that was through faith in Jesus Christ. But this man would actually encourage and write in a letter to a local church that it was all right to be angry. That's conditional.

You'll have to come back tonight to get the other part of it. But this morning we're going to address ourselves to this subject of a good, sanctified exercise of that emotion that can be stirred in your soul by the Spirit of God to actually be angry, and what the word of God says it means. We read in Ecclesiastes, it says, Surely oppression, injustice maketh a wise man mad.

I trust that you'll come to grips with this as we move along, because we want to, if possible by the Spirit's help, develop within your own heart and mind what we believe should be the attitude of Christians in this world in which we live today. A counterpart to that position of being incensed that injustice in this life is to be not hasty in my spirit to be angry. In other words, don't go around with a chip on your shoulder, and don't let your feelings extend out around you for about a half a mile, and anyone that gets too close to you, you're so easily offended that right away you take exception.

Certainly we shouldn't be angry in that sense. But the big question is, is it a sin to be angry? I'm talking about wrath, indignation that comes from the inward part of the believer, deep within one's soul, when we are righteously stirred because of what we see and what we recognize to be sinful and evil. Are we moved by this? The Word of God says, Be ye angry, but don't sin.

So you can see there definitely are some conditions that must be met if we're to be angry in the truly biblical sense. There's a general belief, I think, among most Christians, believers in the world today,

regarding this matter of anger, that we should never get angry. That it's indeed a sign of, perhaps, weakness, immaturity, moving of the flesh, an exercise of the flesh, because we're encouraged to walk in the Spirit and fulfill not the lust of the flesh.

But you can be angry in a true biblical sense, and it be a work of the Spirit of God. And I trust that I'll prove that to you before we finish. In other words, this idea of being historical, regardless of what you hear, what you see, you remain unmoved by it.

You're not incensed by anything that you see, read, or hear in this world today. Don't be emotionally involved in any of these things. Well, I think that's sheer nonsense, and you can't find the Word of God to support that position.

That's not the Bible way. And I think even those that embrace such a concept, generally they don't do it themselves. Too often they may try to hide it, it may be embarrassing, but from time to time they lose control.

And you know what I'm talking about. I think this idea of the Christian being meek, humble, a little bit dumb sometimes, because too often this world looks upon those that profess Christianity to be in a class all by themselves, and just not quite with it completely. A little bit on the ignorant side, that's the way to express it, I think.

Really not knowing what life is all about, having isolated themselves and adopted some biblical position or concept that seems to bring a measure of peace, but isolates them from the realities of life itself. Perhaps that is the way the world looks at the Christian in many instances. I'm not so sure that sometimes we don't think about ourselves in the same way.

In other words, we're kind of second-class citizens in this world in which we live. Well, we're living in this world, and this world's not our home. We have a heavenly home.

And the one that we have entrusted with the salvation of our souls says that when he left this world in which we live, he was going away to prepare a place for us. That where he is, he wants us to be with him. But in that interim of time in which the Church, the body of Jesus Christ, is upon the earth, I believe he expects us to act in a manner that bespeaks of our relationship with him.

Jesus Christ was not a coward, and Jesus Christ did not go and hide from the issues of this life. He faced them head on, and Jesus Christ could be angered. And if you and I have the spirit of Jesus Christ, you and I that would imitate him and be good ambassadors for Jesus Christ, if in the course of our experience as Christians we at times do not find ourselves angered by what we see in this life, something's wrong with us.

Sheep are pictured as being very dumb, nonaggressive animals. And this concept of a Christian ever being mild and meek and lowly, this issue as we find it in the Word of God, must be kept in concept. My sheep hear my voice.

That's true. The family of God and the believer is likened unto a sheep, one that very submissively is willing to bow and to accept the rule of Jesus Christ over his life. Isaiah 53 says, Isaiah 53 says, Oh, we like sheep have gone astray.

Everyone has turned unto his own way, and God hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. But this idea, this figure that we see in the Word of God of a Christian, a believer, being likened unto a sheep, please don't carry that figure too far. Because if you do, the whole thing breaks down and it loses its meaning.

Because you may carry it beyond the intended teaching. We're supposed to be good soldiers for Jesus Christ, and sheep don't make good soldiers. You put them out in the line and they don't know what to do.

So there is a quality in the Christian life that misspeaks of someone that is indeed stark, strong, aggressive, and we may need more of that in this day in which we live. Because I believe that essentially what we're talking about is an anger that is responsive to injured love or violated right. Paul says, Be ye angry.

I think he knew what he was talking about. His experience in life had taught him that there was an appropriate time to be angry. He meant what he said.

No doubt this was drawn from his own experience. Any Christian that is insensitive to wounded love, a violation of all that is morally good and right, these denunciations of all that is holy and godlike in the world today, decency, righteousness. If you can't be moved by that, believer, beloved in Jesus Christ, you must be dead or fast asleep, one of the two.

If this doesn't arouse something in you, sometimes it's called righteous indignation. And we're so fearful sometimes of assuming that role and that position. We're fearful that we may be called something that we wouldn't like.

I think too often it causes us to retreat and become cowardly in our witness for Jesus Christ. The Word of God calls the Christian the salt of the earth. The Word of God says, When the salt has lost its saltiness, it will be trodden under the feet of men.

And I think that Christian testimony today is being trodden under the feet of men, the men of this world, the ungodly of this world, because they don't think we have enough courage to stand up for what's right. And that's not very complimentary. We need some courage.

We need some backbone. We need to stand up for all that is right. We need to call sin, sin.

You spell it S-I-N. It's a horrible thing. It's the most costly thing in this world, S-I-N.

Rebellion against the authority and the rule of God over our human life started way back in the Garden of Eden, and it has pervaded the whole human race, and it's with us today. And there's a sinful nature within the heart and the bosom of every man that breathes and walks upon the face of the earth. You can't improve on it.

You can educate it. You can refine it. You can do anything you want to with it, but flesh is flesh.

And the old sinful nature, the old man, will ever be in rebellion against the will and the way of God. And we're living in a world in which worldliness, the old man rules, he's supreme. And it's high time that the Christian that knows the dreadfulfulness of sin and what it does, how it ruins, how it mars, and that the wages of sin is death, and what a tremendous price was paid to settle the sin question once and for all, in that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who knew no sin, was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

We're aware of how dreadful sin is, and we should take an open, courageous stand against anything that is sinful. I think we've been quiet too long. We've reached the day when the Church, the body of Jesus Christ, should rise up as one, with one voice, and say, We're going to speak out for righteousness, for holiness, for goodness, because we know it's important.

The world doesn't take us seriously because we don't take ourselves seriously. We look upon ourselves as being weak as far as confronting the issues in this life and the things that are so ungodly. And they know it.

They speak boldly, they speak courageously, they speak with authority. We let them get by with it. I don't think we should.

Be angry, be incensed in your soul over the thought that evil and sin is not being challenged in the world today. Indeed, we're left in this world for a purpose. God expects us to, indeed, represent Him in a manner that bespeaks of His holiness and His righteousness.

I think of this dear woman, Anita Bryan. I'm a great admirer of hers. I don't know a whole lot about her, but what I've seen of her and what I've heard of her, I take my hat off to her.

She put her career, put everything on the line. It was simply because she was incensed, she was angry about what she saw. The very idea of those that would practice evil, corruptness, vileness, sin.

And they would say, it's all right, there's nothing wrong with it. Well, she held up the Word of God and said, it's a sin, and I'm not going to endorse it, and I'm going to fight it. You see, nothing mattered until she said, I'm going to fight you.

She said, I'm a good soldier for the Lord Jesus Christ, and I know there's a price that will be paid. And I won't leave you in the dark this morning, either. You go out of this place and you say, I'm going to take a stand against sin.

I'm going to call sin, sin when I see it. You'll pay a price. You're not going to win any popularity contest.

You might find yourself even shunned and avoided. So what? Isn't it better to be able to go home and to lie down upon your bed and have a clear conscience, knowing that I've spoken out against what I believe is contrary to the will and the way of God? And I want to see righteousness preserved. After all, something could happen in a moment of time that would take us out of this life, out of this world, into the very presence of God, the rapture of the Church, the Body of Christ.

And then would be, as you would imagine, a period of seven years upon this earth. We've been hearing a lot about that in these last few weeks. And it won't be a throne of grace, my friend.

It'll be a throne of judgment, a throne of judgment, in which this world will feel the wrath of God like it never felt it before. And it'll only be a prelude to the day when God's wrath and judgment will be poured out against every unrepentant sinner that's upon the face of the earth. I think of Just Lot, and that's what he's called in the Word of God, 2 Peter 2. It says, Just Lot, his soul was vexed by what he saw in the city of Sodom and Gomorrah.

You may not feel very kindly toward Just Lot. There he was in that wicked place. But you know, the important thing is that the Word of God tells us that those two cities were destroyed.

God's judgment fell upon them for one specific purpose, that all of those that would live ungodly lives thereafter would be warned by what they see happen there. Do you think Sodom and Gomorrah is going to happen here? You better believe it is. The judgment of God is going to fall upon this earth one day.

It's going to fall upon all of those that have rebelled in their hearts against God, all of those that have lived wickedly and sinfully, rejecting the grace of God and the mercy of God as found in the person of Jesus Christ. The judgment of God, the wrath of God that has been kindled, it's going to fall. And when we read the Word of God, we seek to warn men.

We seek to entreat men to be reconciled to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible sets forth these standards of righteousness and justice as, indeed, Christians are not emotionally stirred, angry. When we see these standards being violated or scoffed at or ridiculed, there's something wrong with us, beloved.

There's something wrong with us. When I can stay in the company of people in this world and they speak out against God, when they speak out against that which is righteous and holy and good, and I remain quiet, there's something wrong. Something wrong.

I tell you, with all that you see and all you hear and all that you are subjected to today, if it doesn't bother you, there's something wrong. There's something wrong. Pornography, filth, so much that's on television, so much that's on the movie screen, so much that's distributed in our schools.

You find it on the library shelf in our schools. Pornography, actually rejections of righteousness and holiness, scoffing and sneering at these things that are truly biblical in every sense of the word, and are indeed our reproach and abomination in the sight of God. I tell you, our capacity to love is a wonderful thing in itself.

How the soul is delighted, the warmth that we feel when we express love to someone else. And in turn, love is expressed to us. What a wonderful feeling it is to be loved, and there's not a soul that lives upon the face of the earth that doesn't long for someone to love them.

But you know the same Spirit of God that gives us that capacity to love, He gives us that capacity to be angry. Those two emotions, they're so close together. Because we do love, we love God, we love His Word, we love Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

We are jealous for our God, that His ways would be preserved among His people, and it makes us angry when we see these things being violated. You look around today and you tell me that what you see, what you hear, these things don't bother you. Well, maybe we've joined the crowd.

Maybe we are no longer just living in this world. We've settled down with those in this world that are opposing and defying God. The Word of God says, Be not conformed to the ways of this world.

We can become wary in the truest sense of the word. Our consciences become calloused. We're no longer sensitive to holiness and righteousness.

The Word of God says, Godliness with contentment is great gain. I've said it so often, people are interested in being happy and not being godlike. Just let me be happy.

That's all that matters. Let me be happy. I'll take it like it comes.

You see, we can align ourselves so closely with this world. You look out over the world today, it's hard to pick out those that are standing up for righteousness. We've just kind of melted into the picture.

We don't have that clear definition in our character of being different. We should be characterized, wherever we are, as an individual, as a man, as a woman, a boy or girl, that stands up for God. In a godless world, it takes a little backbone, it takes a little courage.

It takes that purpose of heart to come what may, and regardless of the I'm going to call sin, sin. You say, you're going to suffer because of it. I accept that suffering.

Jesus Christ was incensed at sin. It made him angry. It made him very angry.

Mark 3.5 records one of those instances when the Lord Jesus Christ, in the face of those that opposed him, those that were seeking to, in a sense, discredit him, that on the Sabbath day, when he would do an act and miracle of healing. You know, it says they watched him every move, knowing what was in their heart. It grieved him in his soul and it made him angry.

And he could turn to those pharisaical leaders in that day and say, ye are of your father the devil. Yes, there are people today that profess to be very religious and sincere in what they're doing, and they're no more than ministers of light. And that light shines from that angel of light, Satan himself, Satan's emissaries in the world today.

Indeed, religious profession today is filled with so many things that are alien and foreign to the true spirit of Jesus Christ, that you have to be very discerning to be able to detect that which is indeed false. But it abounds. And when our Lord would look about and see these things, it made him angry.

God's anger was kindled toward the children of Israel. In that wilderness experience, he would have destroyed them. That had not been for Moses.

God could get angry. And think about the Jew today and his rejection of Jesus Christ. We will not have this man to rule over us.

And God is angry. And God will yet bring the Jews, the nation of Israel, into that land and that place called Palestine. And for a period of seven years, he's going to deal with them.

And believe me, if you read the book of Revelation, from chapter 4 to 19, you're going to discover that what they're going to be experienced to is unlike anything they've ever been exposed to in the past. It's going to make Hitler look like a piper, the things that the Jewish nation will be subjected to for those seven years. I'll remind you that John 3.36 says something that tells us of God's present danger and anger with those that reject the Son of God.

And the wrath of God today has been staged. It doesn't mean that it's not there. It hangs as an ominous cloud over the life of every individual that lives today, willfully rejecting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

His anger is being impounded. One day it will be unleashed in all of its fury. As many as refuse to obey and to receive Jesus Christ, the wrath of God abides upon them.

That's present tense. Right now, that individual that's rebelling against God and his Christ and the salvation that he's provided, the wrath of God could fall upon that soul at any moment. And that individual is only one breath away from eternity and experiencing the wrath and the judgment of God.

Psalm 7, verse 11 says this, God is angry with the wicked every day. Every day you get up and live another day without Christ, you're inviting the wrath, the anger, and the judgment of God upon your soul. Is it all right to be angry in the cruelest scriptural sense of the way that we've used it this morning? Indeed.

Let the Christian be angry and fenced within his soul with all that he sees in the world that's opposed to the character and the person of Jesus Christ, our Lord. And let us speak out with boldness against evil and against sin, and take a stand as a good soldier for Jesus Christ. Let us be good ambassadors for Jesus Christ.

We will represent upon this earth our risen, glorified, ascended Savior that is at the right hand of God, and he expects a whole lot out of us. Because what they see in us, the way we react in every situation, the way we behave ourselves, it tells the world what Jesus Christ is like. And God forbid that they would get anything other than a perfect picture, representation of the person of Jesus Christ.

This evening we're going to speak about the danger that's involved in being angry, and there is indeed a definite danger. Anger, what we feel in our souls, this emotion that is so real and a part of us, it can be exercised in the wrong way, and the product of it is something that would grieve the Spirit of God. But this morning, remember, God loves you, but if you haven't received Christ, he's angry with you.

And if you die without Christ, he'll send you to hell, and that without mercy. You think in your own heart this morning, have I received Jesus Christ as my Savior? Do I know some point in my life's experience that I've bowed the knee and I've confessed with my tongue, Jesus Christ is Lord? And you know, don't say, I'm not sure, I don't know. You know, if you haven't, you can do it right now.

I know, Satan will say, you can't do it now. Too short. You don't have enough time.

We have two or three minutes before twelve o'clock. And as we bow and have prayer, you accept Christ. And beloved, every Christian in this audience this morning, purpose in your heart that you're going to learn to take a stand in this world in which we're living today.

Make your life count for God. And when you see sin, say, it's sin! No compromising. And you're going to call it just as black as it is.

Shall we pray? Our Father in heaven, we bow in thy presence and thank thee for this day and for the many privileges of this day, for an open Bible and for a wonderful gospel to preach, the truth concerning Jesus Christ, your Son, that we're living in this day of grace, a day of God's mercy. And for every soul today that deliberates, that halts between two opinions, that hasn't received Christ, O God, by thy Spirit, move upon those hearts. And help them, we pray thee, to bow their knees and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

And for those of us that name the name of Christ, help us, we pray thee, in the strength that you provide, the power to witness that is ours through your divine Spirit that lives within us. Help us to be all that we can be for our Lord Jesus Christ. Help us to be good witnesses for him.

Help us, we pray thee, to be like those of old, that we turn this world upside down. Because we know, they know, that the holy character of Jesus Christ, our Lord, has been stamped upon us. We've been challenged, we've been empowered to live lives that will be a rebuke to this world in which we live.

For this we ask in our Savior's holy and righteous name, giving thee our thanks. Amen. Phyllis is here, and we'll have perhaps a verse from a hymn.

Howard, do you have a verse? We'll stand and sing this verse or so from a hymn. If I can be of any service, I'll be at the front.

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