

2015.10.18.A Sinful Anger - Carl Robbins - 101715202942

Mon, 8/22 8:19PM 35:44

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

anger, sinful anger, angry, people, god, sin, gospel, paul, person, proverbs, verse, holy spirit, bitterness, righteous anger, ephesians, mortify, man, self awareness, sinners, spirit

SPEAKERS

Carl Robbins



Carl Robbins 00:07

The gospel is not moralism. It's not a set of instructions, like, be nice to each other and share your stuff. That's not the gospel. The gospel is God by the virgin birth became flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ, lived a sinless life, died an atoning substitutionary death, paying the penalty for sinners, rose again and ascended to heaven. The gospel, the good news is that ruined wretched sinners may have free eternal life, if they will but repent of their sins and trust solely in the finished work of Christ. That's the gospel. That's the preface, the foundation for everything we'll say. But after we receive the gospel, and have a new legal standing, God begins to change us radically. In several of his epistles, Paul rehearses this order. First, the Gospel, then holiness. First justification, then sanctification. First the indicative, then the imperative. So don't go to your lost and unchurched friends and preach Ephesians 4, the texts we'll look at today as the gospel, or Colossians 3 or Romans 12 to them. They'll be confused and you'll be guilty of moralism. Start with the gospel, but don't leave them there. For 24 Sundays we've studied the indicative, also known as the first three chapters of Ephesians, the gospel, and we looked at all the parameters of the gospel. We saw God's eternal election of sinners. We saw Christ's redemptive work. We saw the unveiling of the mystery that God intended to put Jews and Gentiles together into the same church. But then, as I told you about week after week, we're coming to a corner and we're going to turn that corner. Because Paul after setting the foundation, in the first three chapters of Ephesians, the the foundation of the Indicative This is what God has done for sinners. Then we turned that corner and walked into Ephesians 4, the apostle Paul has now been talking about God's imperatives, his holy pattern for how His redeemed people are supposed to live, what we are to put off, and what we're to put on. He has been teaching us the pattern for our sanctification. And last week, we saw Paul clearly teach that the believer who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Truth, must always tell the truth, there is never a situation in which you're justified to lie, and that they must mortify any tendency towards deceit. Today, we will hear the Apostle Paul tell us that the believer must mortify sinful anger. One of the marks of the mature, holy, spirit filled Christian is that they are peaceful, the fruit of the Spirit, the evidence that the spirit is indwelling them according to Galatians 5 is peace, not anger, the temper tantrum, the outburst the storming out of the room is either the mark of the spoiled bratty child or the unregenerate adult. And as we

examine this text, it's very simple, short text, verse 26 and 27. I want you to purpose to be honest and do something even more than be honest. The other night, Sandy and I had the great privilege to sit down with most of our adult children and have a special dinner and we were talking about the issue of self awareness. About my old dictum. People who don't get it, don't get it that they don't get it. That's also known as lack of self awareness. And, and I will tell you where this shows up almost as much as any place. And that's the issue of anger. I'm not angry. I'm not angry. I'm not raising my voice. I don't have a problem with anger. It is baffling. It's astounding when it comes to self awareness. How many people who are confessing believers have a serious anger issue, but they don't acknowledge it. They certainly don't confess it as sin. They don't repent of it. They don't ask forgiveness either on the horizontal level with wives or husbands or children, or God's forgiveness, they always ignore it. They downplay it through a complex web of rationalizations. And this morning, I'm going to hold the mirror of Scripture up to your face. Look carefully. Be honest. Is it describing you with your children with your spouse? Driving on Woodruff Road.

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Carl Robbins 05:02

If it is, what I'm going to call you to do is hard work. That's what Ephesians 4:26 and 27 is, it's a call to heart work. Let's pray together as we seek to open this word. Sovereign Lord, Your Word is perfect, restoring the soul, making wise the simple, enlightening the eyes of the blind. Your Word is the power of God unto salvation for everyone that believes. But we are by nature blind. We desperately need the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. So we asked for you now, in this hour to enlighten us. Give us a teachable, a humble a lowly heart, free from pride, defensiveness, and worldly wisdom, and teach us, teach us by this word, and then transform us, we pray in the name of Jesus, our only Lord, amen. Since we're going to spend the next few minutes talking about anger, look at it there in verse 26, and 27. Be angry, and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Since we're going to spend the next few minutes talking about anger, we should define our terms. Because many people who will say, I am not angry. Well, let me set before you a definition sort of like sovereignty, when I'm talking to people about the sovereignty of God. And I'll say, Do you believe that God is sovereign? Sure, sure. Oh, so you believe that God ordains whatsoever things come to pass? No, I don't believe that. Sort of like that with anger. Are you angry? No, I'm not angry - voice going up all the time. Let me define it for you. A strong feeling of displeasure and antagonism accompanied by emotions, words and actions. Let me say that again. It's not a perfect definition but it'll do. A strong feeling of displeasure and antagonism accompanied by emotions, words and actions. Our word English word anger comes from a Greek word that means to strangle someone. The Old Testament Hebrew word for anger means to smolder, to smoke to be ready to burst into flames at any moment. Now, anger in and of itself, I have to give this caveat, I have to say it and surround it so that we're biblical. Anger in and of itself, is not sinful. And we learned this from Paul's careful, very careful, Holy Spirit inspired statement in our text, be angry, do not sin. There's a careful distinction being made here between being angry and being sinfully angry. It's possible. Although rare, it's possible to be angry and not sin. In Psalm 7:11. For example, we are told that God is angry with the wicked every day. Of course, his anger is not sinful. In John chapter two, verse 17, the Lord Jesus Christ comes into his temple, his temple.

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Carl Robbins 08:03

And he's angry. He fashions of whip out of leather cords, he drives the money changers out of

the temple, yet we know that he never sinned, his anger was perfectly righteous. In Mark three, verse five, we're told that Christ was angry with the Pharisees, when they were trying to entrap him and keep him from doing good. The good was healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. But again, he was not sinning. And my initial assertion is there is such a thing as righteous anger. But I will quickly add and say, few of us can ever claim that our anger is righteous indignation. In fact, I'm not sure I've seen righteous anger very often. Usually anger, even if it's for a good reason, has a lot of pride and self interest mixed up in there. The saintly George Matheson prayed, Oh Lord, thou knowest that I do well to be angry, but I had mistaken the times to be so. That's a wise prayer for you and I. Notice how often in addition to our text, Paul in his list of sin and he makes a list of common ailments of the flesh, points to anger in Galatians 5:20. Paul is listing the deeds of the flesh, He enumerates hatred, contentions, outbursts of wrath, dissension murder. Those are the deeds of the flesh in Colossians 3, when Paul lists what to put off, he says, anger and malice. And we're doing the same thing here in verse 26, and 27. We're in that put off section. Now there's a few ways - let me distinguish them for you a few ways of distinguishing righteous anger from sinful anger. Righteous anger arises from an accurate perception of true evil, a violation of God's person or his moral of law. It focuses on God and His law not on me and my will. Righteous anger is always God centered. If you're driving down Woodruff Road and you're honking and angry and gesturing, that's not theocentric it's not legit. Let me just go ahead and tell you that right now. Righteous anger, and here's where we usually fail is always self controlled. It never causes one to be profane, loses temper be retaliatory or vengeful, because godly anger is slow. It doesn't have a hair trigger. Remember how God's anger works? Psalm 103. We're told the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger. Think of how God when he made the the Abrahamic promise to Abraham in Genesis 15. He said, I'm going to judge the Amorites, but not for several generations, because their iniquity is not yet full. A good example of righteous anger would be Exodus 32, when Moses comes down off the mountain, and his anger is heated by God's covenant people engaged in national idolatry, violating the first table of the law, the first and second commandments with their construction of the Golden Calf. Another good example is Acts 17. When Paul comes into the city of Athens, his anger was heated by the idolatry he saw on every hand we read these words in Acts 17. Paul spirit was provoked within him. When he saw that the city was given over to idolatry. Our anger usually looks more like that which Jesus described in Matthew 5. I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother, without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment. Jesus warns that this type of anger - unrighteous anger is indicative of an unregenerate man on his way to hell.

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Carl Robbins 12:01

What are the ingredients of sinful anger? And again, this may be a little bit too close for comfort. One especially I want to say this in passing - parents, I hope you're listening carefully. There are all kinds of good resources for parenting the angry child. One of those is I think we keep a copy of it or more in our bookstore, the Luke Priolo book *The heart of anger*, which is a glorious parenting resource if you have an angry child. But parents you should pay special attention in listening to this. What are the ingredients of sinful anger? Sinful anger is always about me. I am being thwarted. My plans, my desires, my will is being thwarted and woe to anyone who gets in my way. Sinful anger protects me to the exclusion of the claims of others, sinful anger always takes it personally. It's a slight to my honor, damage to my reputation, disrespect to my person. These are frequent anger triggers. The underlying message of angry people is, things ought to be going my way. Angry people feel that any blocking or changing of my plans is an unbearable dignity, and I should not have to suffer this way. Sinful anger is repetitive. We're told in Proverbs 19:19, a man of great wrath will suffer punishment. And if you

rescue him, you'll just have to do it again. One of my roommates in college was this person. It was over and over again. It was on the basketball court. It was in the kitchen. It was in the car. It was repetitive. Another ingredient of sinful anger is it's always foolish. A day or two later when if you were to show the video to the person say, wasn't that ridiculous? If they had any self awareness? They'd say Yeah, it really was. This is what Proverbs 14 says. Proverbs 14:17 says, a quick tempered man acts foolishly. By saying it's foolish. I mean, it's unwise and irrational. Solomon recognizes this when he writes in Ecclesiastes 7:8 anger rests in the bosom of fools. Sinful anger is always foolish. Sinful anger, in fact, is and we're still talking about the ingredients of sinful anger. It's the distinguishing mark of the fool in Proverbs 29. We read these words - a fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back. See, the fool has no self control. Throughout church history, ethicists have categorized the ingredients of sinful anger as falling into the following five categories. Listen to these carefully. First of all, sinful anger happens when you get angry too easily. A man that's quick tempered and easily offended. He has a hair trigger. Everyone walks on eggshells around him. Do you know that person? Gets angry too easily he can get angry over nothing. Second, is when you get angrier than you should, your anger is disproportionate to the offense. Or third, when you stay angry too long. When your anger smolders into resentment then bitterness then grudge-holding. Years ago I was counseling a woman who had taken offense several years before a church officer had critiqued her ministry. As a passing word, it happened in the hall. And this church officer had critiqued and walked on by had forgotten about it. The woman came to me and she said, I have a problem with that man. I said, what is it. And she laid out the scenario, he walked by me. And there was another person who heard it and I said, well, we need to put the two of you together so there can be repentance and forgiveness and restoration. She slammed her hand down on the chair and she said, I will never forgive him. And I said, two sentences. He critiqued your ministry in two sentences, and he walked on how long ago did that happen - six years ago. And I said, you still holding on to that - I will never forgive him. That's sinful anger. When anger turns into resentment, bitterness, grudge holding. A fourth category is when you get angry, wrongly, such as when a friend points out your sin, or when you're rightly demoted or passed over or even fired.

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Carl Robbins 17:01

Fifth, when you get angry, and it's demonstrated in unlawful ways, profanity, destruction of property, storming out of the room. Sinful anger shows up in strong hurtful language, belittling, making sarcastic statements, mean spirited statements to the object of their anger, clamming up and pouting. What are the causes what's underneath it? Because I said, we're going to do hard work. What are the causes of sinful anger? Let's dig in deep. Let's ask the question of why. Why does this person do that? Why did they blow up? First of all, this person doesn't believe in the justice of God. In our vengeful anger, we forget or disregard the foundational biblical truth that God is the righteous judge. Remember what Paul says in Romans 12:19, do not avenge ourselves but give place to wrath for it as it is written, VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY says the Lord. A second reason why as we're asking the why question, parent, you're saying, Why does your child get so angry? Why do they have a hair trigger? Pride. Selfishness we get angry people get angry because they don't get their way I've seen an infant family life and in the neighborhood. I've seen it at General Assembly and Presbytery and session meetings. I've seen it in small children and siblings and husbands and wives. If I don't get my way I get angry. That's why. It comes down to pride. Why are you so angry because I'm proud. Another root cause of sinful anger is lack of love. Since sinful anger insists on its own way, it's easily exposed as a lack of love since love, according to 1 Corinthians 13 does not insist on its own way. Another root cause is lack of self control. When you see a person who blows up like that, you

say, this is a person who if they are regenerate, that the fruit of the Holy Spirit is barely begun to grow because there's no self control. Why did they do that? Because there's no fruit of the Spirit, the inability to rein themselves in, which is the evidence of conversion and the indwelling Holy Spirit. How do you know a man has converted? He has the fruit of the spirit of self control. Remember what Solomon writes in Proverbs 25, whoever has no rule of His own Spirit is like a city broken down without walls. Another bottom line issue that has to be said as the cause of sinful anger is that oftentimes there is no cause. The fallen heart of man can produce anger with no reason remember what Jesus says in Matthew chapter 5. You've heard it said that you should not murder but I say to you whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And what Jesus is pointing to, is that our hearts are so dark, we can generate anger even without a good, legitimate cause. The amazing thing that happens here are the people who then will try to justify, dismiss, blame shift and change the subject. They'll try to rationalize and justify their anger by saying, I was tired. Then learn that when you're tired, you should simply disappear and be silent. I was provoked. Or they'll try to justify their anger and listen to this. Have you ever used this? I was frustrated. That's why I did that. What that actually means is my plans were thwarted. I'm so proud that when my plans were thwarted this is I'm trying to use cover language - while I was so frustrated, That's why I said that. Just be honest. I was proud. You were thwarting my plans? That's why I blew up. What are the effects of sinful anger? Now I'm holding the mirror right to you. What are the effects? What happens when you blow up? When you yell at the kids that way? Or your wife or your co workers or your neighbors? Here are the things that that happens because of sinful anger. The first is it stirs strife. That's what Proverbs 15:18 the last verse that Pastor Dodds read in our Old Testament reading is it stirs strife, in other words, sinful anger always separates. My angry friend let me just say this as blunt as I can, you are repelling people.

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Carl Robbins 21:43

Do you have that self awareness? Have you noticed when you get angry that people leave the room? Instead of winsomely attracting people to friendships, sinful anger drives people away? I remember vividly a conversation with a gentleman who told me he was relationally frustrated because he had no close friends. And he asked me why and what he should do about it. When I told him that his anger repelled others, and that was why no one wanted to be close to him. He was shocked. He didn't get it. He said, You think Do you think so? I know so. I've been in the room with you several times. Anger always - one of the effects is it stirs strife and repels people, for people, believers who are to be winsome, to be attractive, so that we may impart Christ. This this undercuts our Gospel witness if we're always repelling people and driving them away because of an angry personality. A second effect is sinful anger creates sinful byproducts such as murder happened early in the Bible, Cain got angry sinfully and then killed Abel. The first time the Bible mentions anger in Genesis four or five it led to murder. When Jesus preached his first sermon at his hometown synagogue, in Luke 4 the people got angry, and they tried to murder him. Anger is just the first step on the spectrum headed towards murder. One of the sinful byproducts is murder. Another sinful byproduct is bitterness. You know the spectrum. Angry, resentful, bitter, resentment, is anger held onto and internalized. It arises in the person, the heart of the person who feels like they've been ill treated, but don't think they can do anything about it. A wife with an overbearing husband, an employee with a tyrannical boss, bitterness is resentment that deepens and becomes a cancer that eats you alive. Another effect of sinful anger, not only is it stir strife, not only does it create sinful byproducts, it doesn't lead to righteousness. Remember what James says in James 1, the wrath of man doesn't produce the righteousness of God. And righteousness is what the believer and the kingdom of God are all about. Another effect of sinful anger. Look at our text in verse 27. It gives the devil

a place. It gives him an entrance, a foothold for people who are supposed to know our three enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil. Whenever you open that door, in rage and sinful anger, you're saying, Come on in Diablos come on in indwell have your way with me. Sinful anger being a root sin reveals much about a man. Show me a man in a moment of sinful anger and I can tell you a lot about him. It shows that he's a proud man. Were there less pride there would be less heat. It shows that he's a weak man incapable of ruling his own spirit, it shows that he's an unmodified man. He's taken no pains to kill sin, it shows that he's a rash man, an uncontrolled man, not a considered prudent and wise man. So what to do about it? First of all, remember the gospel, the whole gospel, Christ did not only die to justify you, He died to sanctify you don't make a division in the gospel and say, well, it doesn't matter, Jesus died for my sins. So I'll just go on being angry, my friend, then you've misunderstood the gospel. Christ died to justify sinners, then sanctify sinners. Jesus by His finished work delivered you from something - namely bondage to sin, he has broken that bondage. And so the first thing that we must recognize is, we must recognize that oftentimes, we are ignoring half of the gospel. Another thing we should remember, we need to remember the pattern that we are being conformed to. It is the life of Christ. And remember what we're told about him. He is slow to anger, gentle, and lowly in heart. That's the pattern that we're being conformed to is the pattern of the life of Christ. I must tell you too by way of application, if you're going to modify sinful anger, you got to be honest. You have to first see it as wickedness and a transgression of the law of God like adultery or heresy. It's listed along with all the other deeds of the flesh in Galatians 5, you see, one of the problems with angry people is they just don't see the sin. They see it as Well, that's the family trait.

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Carl Robbins 26:45

Right? It's, it's sin. It's something to be repented of, and mortified. Another application, you should see is recognize this text that you just read past very quickly in verse 26 and 27, is giving you keen insights into spiritual warfare. In the midst of this discussion on anger, Paul warns to not give any place to the devil. Now we're going to talk about spiritual warfare in great depth when we come to Ephesians chapter 6, sort of the locus classicus Ephesians six, verse 10 through 18. But Paul brings it up here, Paul understands that the evil one is very active and tempting people to be uncontrolled, and vent and engage in sinful anger. And he is patiently waiting for that tiny crack in the door. Uncontrolled anger, and he will ruin your credibility before a watching world by one incident of sinful anger. And when you blow up, you open the door to a long litany of other sins and ill effects. Another application you should know from this text. Let me tell you about your relationships. Stay away from angry people. I'm not saying that just as worldly wisdom. Over and over again, Proverbs tells us this. In fact, Proverbs 22 says, Make no friendship with an angry man. And with a furious man, do not go lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul. Parents. If your child is friends with an angry kid, steer them in the other direction. There's no age limit on this wisdom from Proverbs. It's not just people who are over 21. If your eight year old is friends with an eight year old, angry child, listen to these words. Don't be smarter than God. Make no friendship with an angry man. Anger is contagious. It's just like cynicism and sarcasm. This means adults. Angry talk show hosts that are always trying to get you to be angry over their agenda. Some of you spend more time with them three or four hours a day than with any other person, turn them off. Stay away from angry people. Heed the wisdom of Proverbs and steer a wide berth around them. Young people don't marry an angry person or even a grumpy person. What you see as grumpy in public is always 20 times worse in private, you know that, don't you? That what you see in public behavior, that's the tip of the iceberg. If you see a person who's grumpy in public, then underneath is this iceberg of anger. Don't even - don't even go out on a date with a grumpy

person. Stay a million miles away from them. Especially another application you should know from this text, especially repent of anger directed towards those you should be kindness towards your wife, your husband, your children, fellow believers. Maybe You lashed out in sinful anger against these people on the way to worship today. And you got some serious heart work and repentance and messes to clean up on the way home. Another application you should see from this text, the way you go about addressing this is by the Word and prayer. Fill your mind with appropriate scripture for memory, such as Proverbs 29:11 A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back. And by prayer, do you pray. If you have this trait Do you pray regularly daily, using especially the Lord's Prayer, the six petition lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, do you use the means that God has appointed for dealing with your sin, He will change you by the use of the word and prayer. The Holy Spirit will not just magically transform you he'll use the means that he's appointed the word and prayer to conform you into the image of Christ. Are you using the means. And then notice the counsel that we have in Ephesians 4:26, the wisest of counsel to angry people, do not let the sun go down on your wrath.

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Carl Robbins 31:15

If you don't repent of sinful anger quickly, it will turn into a habitual pattern and bitterness. And we are told in Hebrews 12, it becomes a root that goes down deep and poisons many. My friend if you have the pattern of waking up the next day, and you're still carrying around that anger, cherishing it, brooding over it, replaying it, then you are poisoned with bitterness. And it is clear that now anger dominates your thinking, your planning and your speech. This is why verse 26 in the Bible is telling us you need to recognize that anger is like poison, get it off your hands quick. Don't even go to bed with it. Another application. Trust God. According to Romans 12:19, you can trust God that he'll judge all things and people rightly you should not angrily dole out retribution as if you were God. When you modify anger, it demonstrates that you actually believe God and trust that he'll deal with all wrongs. Another very pertinent application, we are entering a period of Elder and Deacon nomination and training and election. Let me say this now and I'll say it over and over again. Do not choose an angry man to rule over you as an Elder or Deacon, don't do it. Out of all the traits that the apostle Paul could mention, he only lists a few that are either qualifiers or disqualifiers. And he repeatedly by the Holy Spirit says, Do not ordain an angry man. He says it in Titus 1 says it in 1 Timothy 3. One of the many reasons why this is so is a man who's going to be an Elder or Deacon must work with a plurality of other men, whether he's an elder or a deacon, and angry men cannot work with others, they don't get it. You will be sabotaging the work of the session or the diaconate if you nominate and elect an angry man, don't do it. That's a warning. Finally, there is a sort of anger that is always wrong. It's always wrong. It cannot be made righteous. It is the height of wickedness. And that is anger against God. You never, ever have a reason to be angry with a good and holy and just God. He's never unkind he's never unjust to you. He says in Romans 8:28, that he is positively working everything together for your good. So today, if you're here and you're bearing a grudge against God, repent, immediately accompanied by tears. Anger is a moral judgment. And in the case of anger against God, it accuses him of wrongdoing of wronging you or sinning against you. Are you thinking that God owes you better? There are types of sin that can never be held on to by the believer. Types of anger that can never be indulged - anger against God is that sin. As we look at this word, let's plead with the Lord now to transform us from anger into joy, to put it off, and to put on joy and contentment with God's purposes. Let's pray together. Our Father, we thank You for this word, which is all for our sanctification as those who have been taken hold of by the gospel. Lord, we pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to be shown in our relationships in our homes, in our offices, in our neighborhoods. In this congregation, we

ask to see the power of the Holy Spirit at work sanctifying us corporately, by households, by individuals that we might be different from the watching world, that where they are marked by anger, resentment and bitterness. Instead, that we would be marked by joy, delight, happiness, We pray this in the name of Jesus, our only Savior, Amen.