

<b>Book</b>	Ephesian – Study 14
<b>Topic</b>	Life Style of Grace – Dealing with Anger and Bitterness
<b>Reference</b>	Ephesians 4:25 – 5:34
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*Ephesians 4:26 - 5:2 (ESV) 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. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 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. 1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.***

#### **THE NATURE OF ANGER:**

If we look at anger and the kind of thing that we saw latch on to is volatile anger. There are people who shoot people in mass murders, they cannot control their anger, but actually anger is more than that. It is more subtle. If you have passive aggressive anger. This is the anger of people who are not angry. They withdraw and sulk. They give you the silent treatment. Then procrastinating that mean you carry out your things inefficiently, giving lip service, doing things differently. So, this is passive aggressive, which is far more common.

People with passive aggressive anger will:

- Temporary comply, agree with you
- Intentional inefficiency, they will do their work slowly
- Let problems escalate
- Hidden but conscious revenge
- Self-depreciation

These people may not shout or scream at you, because you have got authority figures around them. So passive aggressive is a way you react to anger by sabotaging. You got people who are also angry, and they are angry with themselves. Then you have got all sorts of anger:

- You are judgmental, you judge people.
- You have behavioral anger, or you are just overwhelmed. I mean the whole thing, you are planning the Unforgettable 5 and nobody come for practice and you just blow your top as it were.
- Chronic anger will go into a high blood pressure. You see the people, they are always irritable.

- Verbal anger will be lashing out.
- Assertive anger is a good kind of anger, they work harder. That is an anger that is constructively used to actually carry out their jobs.

**EPICUREAN VIEW:** In the ancient times, the Epicurean deny their anger. They always get away.

- If the wife makes you angry, you leave her
- If food makes you angry, you don't leave it
- If friends make you angry, you leave them

Because they perceive anger is a bad thing. So whenever they get anger, they just basically leave it, they run away.

**STOICS VIEW:** The other alternative is the stoics, which basically stifle your anger. They say it is not good to be angry, so therefore they stifle it. They control it, they deny it. The trouble in this is like it will cause you to be very ill if you are a stoic. No real person can be a stoic.

Buddhist are somewhat like stoics. Let me read to you a section from Buddha's thing.

*Suppose some bandits catch one of you and sever his body limb from limb with a two-handed saw, and if he should feel angry thereby even at that moment, he is no follower of my teaching.*

It means they are not allowed to be angry at all. That's what Buddhist teaching is.

*Let a man remove his anger. Let him root out his pride. Let him overcome all fetters of passions. No sufferings overtake him who neither clings to mind-and-body nor claims anything of the world. — Dhp., v. 221*

That means a Buddhist must be devoid of all or any kind of emotion.

*When we feel angry with any person, we should try to find out some good in him, either in his way of thinking, or in his way of speaking or in his way of acting. If we find some redeeming quality in him, we should ponder its value and ignore his bad qualities as natural weaknesses that are to be found in everyone - Ven. K. Piyatissa Thera*

Gandhi says

*"When you are in the right, you can afford to keep your temper; when you are in the wrong, you cannot afford to lose it."*

So either way you cannot lose your temper, which make sense. When you are right what for you lose your temper, when you are wrong you cannot afford to lose your temper. Because if you lose your temper, it will cause all sorts of trouble to happen. Now let's go to the bible that puts you into context of what anger really is. The bible tells you

**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.**

This is an imperative tense in Greek, which means Paul is asking to be angry. It is opposite from Buddha, opposite from everybody else. **Be angry but do not sin.** This is a little bit tricky.

### ***How do we become angry and you do not sin?***

So therefore, there is a relationship between anger and sin and there is an overlap where you are angry and sinful. So, I think that's the difficult part for us. It is not difficult being angry, but it is very-very difficult to be angry and not sinning. Now God-centered anger is basically based on His love, His grief, and against injustice. So that's what God would be angry about. God gets angry, in fact you could say that God is angry all the time.

*Deuteronomy 9:7-8 (ESV) From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord. 8 Even at Horeb you provoked the Lord to **wrath**, and the Lord was **so angry** with you that he was ready to destroy you.*

Godly quality is anger. Quite apart from any other religious thought.

*Numbers 32:13-15 (ESV) And the **Lord's anger was kindled** against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was gone. 14 And behold, you have risen in your fathers' place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the **fierce anger** of the Lord against Israel! 15 For if you turn away from following him, he will again abandon them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all this people."*

Again, anger in response to people's rebellion. Jesus was also angry.

*Mark 3:4-5 (ESV) And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent.*

These are the people who are pharisees. They were upset because Jesus healed somebody on a Sabbath Day.

*5 And he looked around at them **with anger**, grieved at their hardness of heart,*

So, his anger is because they were so hard-hearted and they are so evil that when Jesus healed the man with a withered hand they got upset with him, which means they are careless, hard of heart, they have no compassion for the man with a callous hand. They never celebrated the healing and they just reacted. So therefore, Jesus looked at them with anger.

*Matthew 21:12-13 (ESV) And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. 13 He said to them, "It is written, 'my house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."*

No real reference to anger, but do you think Jesus just entered the temple took the thing and very nicely just throw. No, Jesus took a whip. He whacks people and he throw and overturned. It is like throwing a tantrum as it were. Jesus didn't do it nicely. Jesus got very pissed off.

*Romans 1:18 (ESV) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.*

There are many unrighteousness men in the world, so God is angry all the time. So, we are talking about God being angry all the time at the unrighteousness of men. So, if you are not angry, it is actually a sign of apathy. Your neighbor came and kick your dog, so what. Your neighbor came and kick your mother, so what. Your neighbor came and stole your wife, so what. So, nothing gets you upset. Apathy is actually more sinful. You should be angry.

Anger is a two-edged sword; you can actually address injustice, or it can become sin as it were. Now let's look at the other kind of anger which is SELF-CENTERED ANGER. Self-centered anger occurs when things don't go your way and you get very-very upset.

*Genesis 4:4-5 (ESV) and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So, Cain was very angry, and his face fell*

Imagine Abel and Cain. They both gave offering to God. Cain gave vegetables and Abel gave meat. God likes the offering of Abel not because it is meat, because God has regard for Abel and his offering, not his offering and then Abel. God has the regard for the man, because it is the ambition, it is the motive behind giving. For Cain and his offering God had no regard, so Cain was very angry. He was unrighteous, he got angry because he didn't get his way. If his brother got accepted, he should be accepted, it doesn't matter what crap he gives God, he is entitled to be accepted. That is his focus.

Jonah got very upset. He was asked to go to Nineveh. People of Israel hate the these people, because these Assyrians have captured their cities, raped their woman, dash their babies against rock. So, nobody ever loved Assyrians, everybody hated them. He was supposed to go up there and preach the gospel. He had a choice and he ran away. He was caught up by a whale for three days and then the whale spat him out after three days. He made his way to Nineveh. He preached the gospel rather reluctantly and the people repented. When people repented, instead of rejoicing Jonah got very upset. Jonah sat outside the city and was very upset.

*Jonah 4:4 (ESV) And the Lord said, "Do you do well to be angry?"*

Which means, what right do you have to be angry. Because God just saved them, and he is upset because God saved them. He is upset with God. He wants God to curse them, not save them. What did God do when you get upset with Him? Does God get upset with you? Jonah shake his fist against God, but God didn't strike him.

*Jonah 4:8-10 (ESV) When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."*

So here Jonah sat outside the city of Nineveh and suddenly God cause a plant to grow up right next to him. It was really hot, and the plant provided nice shade, so he was cooling himself, having his

drink, he thought this was the beach. He loved this plant, and suddenly the east wind came, and the plant died. Then he got upset. He got so upset, he said it is better for me to die than to live.

***9 But God said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry for the plant?” And he said, “Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.”***

The plant died and Jonah is so angry with God. He thinks he owns the plant. God why you kill my plant? The only plant in the whole desert that was mine and you went ahead and killed it. He got upset with God, what should God do?

***Jonah 4:10-11 (ESV) And the Lord said, “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”***

So, the point of the story here is that when we are angry with God. Actually, there is a study done in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology on some Christians

- 62 percent of people on occasion were admittedly angry at God. It happens to be highly educated, women, and younger individuals.
- Among college students, 87 percent of believers reported feeling negative emotions about God after a personal setback or loss...
- 47 percent of grieving people reported anger at God.

It is a very-very common thing. What Jonah experiences is very-very common to all of us and the issue here is that understanding the sovereignty of God. We are angry with God because he is in-charge, anything bad happens in your life, it is his fault because he is the boss. We are angry with God because we hold him responsible because we have an idea of his sovereignty, but you forget one thing, not only is God sovereign, but he is also loving, merciful, goodness, righteous, just and holy. You see, you just focus on one part of His personality and you never take in consideration he has got love, not only for you but he got love for 144000 Assyrians who do not know their right hand from their left hand. Shouldn't God have mercy on them too, even though they are evil people. We only see things from our point of view and most of our anger focus on the fact that I didn't get what I want.

So, this kind of anger is not righteous anger. It is a different kind of anger. When you are angry you got two choices, you run towards God and complain, or you run away from God. So, there are some Christians who experience no anger. If you experience no anger, it either means you have no faith because God doesn't exist, nothing to be angry with or you are such a nice person then your faith is not real. If your faith is real, you will engage God. You need to go to God and trash it out. Jonah goes to God; he tells God I am so pissed off with you I want to die. God doesn't strike him dead. Some of us are passive aggressive, you do not say but you are angry with him. Actually, God wants you to be honest with him, because that's the only way you can grow. Only when you trash things out, it gets sorted out.

### ***How do we deal with anger?***

It is either we run, push towards God or you run away from him.

Anger is a problem for every Christian. Sinful anger is probably involved in 90% of all counseling problems. The anger that you should have would be the righteous anger. You should be angry, but it should be God's kind of anger, a righteous anger. When you see something wrong in society, you should be angry, you should act, but you do not sin at all. There are two conditions

- Do not let the sun go down on your anger and
- give no opportunity to the devil.

So, you can be angry, but you are not going to let the sun go down on your anger, which means it talks to duration. That means your anger must be limited in duration, it cannot burn forever and on and on and on. There must be a limitation. You may not necessarily take this literally. If you are really angry with someone who has hurt you, it is not over in one day. You can say the Bible tells you to be not angry past one day, but actually in your heart you are still angry, and you are not being honest. So therefore, it says you must limit your duration.

**CONTROL:** Give no opportunity to devil. Because when you are angry you are vulnerable, and you will sin. Look at the anger of Cain, Cain was angry because he didn't get what he wants, unrighteous anger. So, before he committed murder, God warned him

*Genesis 4:6-7 (ESV) The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but **you must rule over it.**"*

That means he is actually painting the picture of anger like a leopard, crouching at the door, waiting to wallop you, but how should you deal with anger. You should actually rule over it. That means it is actually possible to control, but anger is huge, it is like a leopard. Henry Kellerman, a psychologist says

1. Anger has an aggressive drive. It's inborn.
2. Anger is expansive. It wants to get bigger.
3. Anger has explosive potential. It wants to burst forth.
4. Anger has an attack inclination. It wants to attack.
5. Anger has a confrontational inclination. It wants to get tough.
6. Anger has an entitled frame of mind. It feels it has the right to get tough.
7. Anger sees itself as an empowerment. It eliminates feelings of helplessness.

So actually, anger is not something that hits you and it goes away, actually it can grow. The anger actually can get bigger and bigger and bigger everyday like a leopard and it will consume you and the devil will use this to consume you.

*Anger is designed to give us the feeling of being re-empowered – almost as though we did get our wish met and exactly when and how we wanted it met.* Henry Kellerman Ph.D.

Be angry and do not sin is actually taken from the Old Testament.

*Psalms 4:4-5 (ESV) 4 Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. 5 Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.*

So here the psalmist tells you to be angry but don't sin. In fact, go into your beds, mull over it and be quiet before God. So, when you are actually angry, you are supposed to mull about it and basically trust God. Let us look at the context

*Psalms 4:2-3 (ESV) O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Selah 3 But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him.*

This person is angry because someone shamed him, they insulted him in public, but even though injustice has been done to him he remembers two things, that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him. So he is angry, he owns the anger, he tells God why he is angry. It is because people turn my honor into shame. So I am angry because of this, but he actually praised through his anger and then

*Psalms 4:6-7 (ESV) There are many who say, "Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!" 7 You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.*

So therefore, in this psalm, he is saying do not be angry. The basis is, he is going to put his trust in God and he has looked back in his own life. He looks forward because he trust the faithfulness of God. This person owns his anger, ponders over it in his bed that he has been treated unfairly, God knows, he praises his anger, he sacrifice his trust to God and he also limits his anger. He doesn't go out and take an M16 and shoot someone because he leaves that to God.

Psalm 137 tells about the people of Israel were in 597 BC, were taken into captive into Babylon. They came in and ruthlessly destroyed the whole place and what the Babylonians like to do is to grab the babies by their feet and swing them like a baseball bat and smash their heads against the rocks. If that happen to you and your baby, you will be very pissed off, very-very upset and this is how he prays.

*Psalms 137 (ESV) 1 By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. 2 On the willows there we hung up our lyres. 3 For there our captors required of us songs and our tormentors, mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" 4 How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! 6 Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy!*

*Psalms 137 :7 **Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites** the day of Jerusalem, how they said, "Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!" 8 O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us! 9 Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock*

Whenever the Bible says remember, it means you do something. It means you go to them and do something. Edomites are the bad people. It means the Edomites actually encourage the

Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem. The psalmist is asking God, one day you come and all those people who dashed our babies, I hope that one day you take their babies and smash it on the rock. It is not a very nice pray, but it is a very honest prayer. He is so angry, he doesn't go and dash people's baby, but he has asked the Lord that you do them as they did to me, but he is pounding, he is trusting God. So, I think he owns his anger, he prays through his anger, brings it before God and he limits his anger. He doesn't go out and dash but he says, Lord I leave it to you. That's how you manage your anger, you own your anger, you know why you have your anger and many of the things that you are angry about is because it didn't get your way. If it didn't get your way, you need to bring before the Lord and you bring it before the Lord, why this fellow like that to me and you pray through that and by doing that you are limiting your anger. You are leaving the recourse to God, how God is going to act. God may dash them, hit them against the rock, it is up to him, but you have already brought it to him.

*Ephesians 4:31 (ESV) Let all **bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice***

So basically, bitterness is an attitude towards a particular person. Anger and wrath is a disposition. That means it is a biasness. Then you have got clamor and slander in speech.

*"Someone once said that staying angry is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die. If your cause is just, you would still find the energy to fight for it even without anger."*

Bitterness will kill you.

*Hebrews 12:15 (ESV) 15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;*

So, you cannot let the root of bitterness come, because it will destroy you. Bitterness is when you sit down and there is a little tape recorder in your brain and you reply the grievances in your mind. We cannot be judges of each other, that's why we cannot hold the bitterness inside. This is a New Testament example

*Romans 12:17-21 (ESV) **Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 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."** 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.***

Which means if you repay someone with the evil that has done to me, that means I have become evil as well. So actually he succeeded. The worst thing that could happen to me is that I do evil, because I don't honor God and the devil has used him in such a way that I have become evil. That's the problem.

This is actually a strategy. The word here, do not be overcome by evil by good is actually a military term. It is like the army is besieging the city. That means there are two forces. You can fight with evil or you can fight with good. God says, good will always overcome evil. Leave justice to God. If



you repay evil with evil, you have lost. The only way that you can defeat evil is by good. How did Jesus Christ defeat evil? By dying on the cross. That's the difference and good will always overcome evil. So you say yourself, okay I want to own my anger, I want to pray through my anger and then I want to limit my anger, but I can't do this.

### ***How can we actually find the strength to do this?***

It says,

1. Refocus our hope. You are actually guaranteed salvation by God. You are sealed and then you are letting all these petty differences, this petty anger frustrates this ultimate outcome. You are acting as a non-Christian as it were. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.
2. Be kind-hearted to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. There is a difference between the psalmist in Psalm 4 and Psalm 137 and the New Testament. The difference is you can actually forgive because Christ forgave you. You either go into bitterness, wrath, anger or clamour or you be kind-hearted and basically it is because of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the gospel. Because of forgiveness we can actually overcome anger. We own our anger, we pray our anger, and we limit our anger, but we are forgiven. Forgiveness because we are forgiven. Forgiveness is the power to break the cycle of anger.

### ***Why should I forgive?***

Because forgiveness is basically a debt that is being paid. If you owe somebody some money and if that is completely paid off then you are free. In fact Isaiah says,

*Isaiah 43:25 (ESV) I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.*

God doesn't remember our sins in such a way that he holds it against you. God erases that judgment.

### ***Why can we do that?***

There is a story told of Starbucks in St Petersburg Florida. One woman came there one day, and she paid for her coffee and she also paid for the coffee of the person behind her and the other person accepted it with gratitude and paid for the person behind her and the person behind her paid for the coffee for the person behind her. This went back to 368 people. The 369<sup>th</sup> person say that I am not paying. Why could they pay it forward. They pay it forward because somebody paid for them and the cross is something like that. Because Christ has forgiven you, you don't come and tell you, you cannot forgive other people.

This idea of paying forward is actually in the human nature. God speaks to us through his son. We are able to forgive because the son forgave. The parable of the unforgiving servant, king forgave him.

*Matthew 18:32-35 (ESV) 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.'*

Because Christ has forgiven every single one of you so much we cannot turn around and if anybody, even though he chop for one hand to the other or betrayed you and touch you, you cannot come before God and say I cannot forgive. Because if you cannot forgive, you are not paying it forward. He has given you so much. So that's the basis.

Forgiveness is granted before it is felt. It is a command. So actually, when you forgive someone, what it means is that when you forgive someone you release the debt, you don't own me anymore. I am not bitter against you; the warmth will take some time to come back. You want to be honest, you, you have to be authentic, the thing is that forgiveness is given before it is felt. It is a command. We are determined to absorb the debt. That means it is a debt thing. Christ paid to me, that means I absorb the debt.

The other motive is love. Mary went to Jesus who was at Simon's house and she poured her Alabaster jar full of perfume to clean him and used her hair to wipe and the reason she loved Jesus so much is that

*Luke 7:47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.*

May be because some of us are so bitter you cannot forgive, because you don't think you have got a lot of sins. He who has forgiven little loves little. If you don't think you are very sinful and that God forgiving you is not a big deal then you won't forgive other people as well. So, your lack of forgiveness in your heart is a reflection of your salvation status as it were. That's why when Jesus actually prays the Lord's Prayer.

So if you are not a forgiving person then you have not be forgiven. You haven't felt the forgiveness. You in fact have experienced that kind of forgiveness.

*Ephesians 5:1-2 (ESV) Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

So basically because we are imitators of God, because we belong to God. So as beloved children we have to walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up. So therefore, the picture here is that we are going to be like Christ. We live our lives after this concept of love and anything that comes in the way, bitterness, hatred, slander, those things are not going to be part of our lives. We have to determine to push them out of life, because we have a new identity.

Identity, motive and thinking are the three things that will change you as a Christian. You don't change because of your will to change, you change because of these three things. Here your identity, you are a beloved child of God.

If I am a beloved child of God, it doesn't matter anymore. So, I am expected to imitate him. I am a sinner just like them but forgiven by God. This is my identity. If you stick to that identity, it gives you great confidence.

***What is your motive for obeying?***

I want to obey God. I want to love God because of the forgiveness of sins and I don't want to grieve the Holy Spirit. That is my motive. The thinking that God hears and sets me apart, God gives joy, God will not judge and good will always overcome evil. So your thinking change, your motive change and your identity change. All these three are brought together, allows you to handle anger, bitterness, greed, every sin in your life you go back to these three things that Ephesians teaches you about. That's how you change your Christian lifestyle as it were.