

Question:

I need Bible commentary on Eph. 4:26. asap. Thanks

Answer:

The first sentence of this verse is actually a quotation from Psalm 4.

Answer me when I call to you,
O my righteous God.
Give me relief from my distress;
be merciful to me and hear my prayer.

How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame?
How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?
Know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself:
the LORD will hear when I call to him.

In your anger do not sin;
when you are on your beds,
search your hearts and be silent Selah
Offer right sacrifices
and trust in the LORD [Psalm 4:1-5]

The first section is a prayer of supplication; the second and third address the ungodly around David. So the part Paul quotes is a call to righteous living. This is appropriate since the topic of this part of Ephesians is “Living as Children of Light.” Check out the verse just before 26:

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and
speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all
members of one body. [Ephesians 4:25]

There are those who think anger itself is sin, but this verse makes it clear that it is not. It is, however, very possible to sin while we are angry. Indeed for most humans their anger is not aroused unless they have personally been harmed. This selfish orientation is sin.

But the Bible speaks of God's anger or wrath, and God will not sin. God is angry about sin, not because the sinner disobeyed, but because the sin destroys the sinner and frequently harms the sinner's neighbors. God loves all his creatures, so his anger is necessarily aroused when any of them are harmed.

Now let's look at the next sentence, which continues with all of verse 27:

Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. [Ephesians 4:26, 27]

The strong implication is that falling asleep while you are still angry would give the devil a foothold. And that brings up an important question. If our anger is not sin; if we are truly angry about harm to someone else we still have to resolve that anger before the day ends. How can one do that when the crime we're angry about is taking place 24-7?

Listen to what Jesus said right after he outlined the prayer that has become known as the Lord's Prayer:

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. [Matthew 6:14, 15]

In order for us to dissipate our righteous anger we must forgive the sin that triggered it. And you might immediately think, "If the sin wasn't against me it isn't up to me to forgive it." That demonstrates a misunderstanding of the issue of forgiving. God's forgiveness is an expression of his mercy and grace. Our forgiveness is ultimately for our own good.

There are two mechanisms by which this works. First, as Jesus made clear, when we forgive sins we open the door to God's forgiveness. Second, if we do not forgive then our anger will remain and the stress will shorten our lives and rob us of the joy we could be having in God.

So, the way to dissipate righteous anger is to forgive, and to forgive before the day is done. This should be part of your evening devotional. Give all the frustrating situations of the day to God. He CAN bear the stress and he CAN take action when it is necessary, doing things well beyond our power.

I hope this helps. May God bless you in your ongoing study of his Word.

Elkanah