

Ephesians 14-07-27b

We're in Ephesians chapter 4, and before we leave this last section, verses 25-32, the quote that Paul uses in verse 26, be angry and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath. And then later on he says, put away all anger. And so I want to understand better, what is he talking about in terms of this orge, this anger that seems to be legitimate but has to be put away.

Well this is a quote from Psalm 4, and if you will turn now to Psalm 4, we're going to take a look at this in its original construction. Some of the things in this psalm have been a bit obscured by the translation, and some of them are not particularly obvious with a casual glance, but it greatly illuminates Paul's argument in the section we are now studying. So we're going to take just a moment to go look at why he quotes this particular thing.

I'm again curious because look at the combination of things in Ephesians 4, this last part. There's the idea of deception versus truth, right? There is the idea of forgiveness and calmness and unity with others versus bitterness, anger, clamor, evil speaking. So there is unity versus division.

There is love and forgiveness versus division, disharmony, and having a problem with somebody. Truth versus deception, unity versus division, fellowship versus disharmony, fellowship versus anger and evil speaking. And he's going to close this section by saying, let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice.

Malice, because these others, that's the motive. Malice means I have ill will. I am deeply unhappy with somebody about something, and that makes me bitter, that makes me full of wrath, that makes me angry.

It causes me to clamor. Bitterness, wrath, and anger are attitudes. Clamor and evil speaking are sins of the tongue.

Starts in the mind and heart, moves out to the mouth in a way that affects others, in a way that infects others. Be angry and do not sin. Psalm 4, the first verse of this psalm in Hebrew, which has been relegated to tiny print in your New King James Bible, says, to the chief musician with stringed instruments, a psalm of David.

Three parts in this first section, and all of them are there for a reason. First of all, this is dedicated to the choir director. This means that this is not a personal contemplation.

This is not a solo. This David designed to be performed in front of the assembly. It's a public performance song.

This isn't, I'm going to go sit on the banks of the brook with my harp and plink this out and commune with God through this song. There are others that are for that purpose. This one is to the choir director, to the one who is going to have this performed in front of an even larger

assembly.

So it's a group thing. What is Ephesians 4 telling us from beginning to end? Don't walk like the Gentiles pursuing their individual pleasure. Live as a member of the body of Christ.

Live as a fellow member of the body of Christ with others. It's a group activity. All of these exhortations to unity instead of division, to speaking the truth with one another, all of these things happen in the company of others.

There are things we have to do on our own. We have the private realm of our soul where there's individual responsibility. This is talking about corporate responsibility.

What do I do in and with others? So when this says to the choir director, and this is true of any psalm dedicated to the choir director, the truth that is contained in that psalm is operating in a one another capacity. Everybody needs to be thinking of this as they stand in the choir or in the assembly. It's a one another set of truths.

That's number one. Number two, with stringed instruments, with stringed instruments, why do we need to know this? That it is with instrumental accompaniment. They didn't have a lot of the instruments we have today.

He doesn't say with trumpet fanfare. He doesn't say with five-piece electric band. Stringed instruments.

What do we know about the function of stringed instruments in Old Testament days? You only need to remember one example to parse this clue. When King Saul had the Spirit of the Lord depart from him and an evil spirit troubled him, what happened? Who did they call? They called this guy. They called David.

And what did he bring and what did he do? He brought his harp, his stringed instrument, and he played. So what is the purpose of stringed instruments? Drive away bitterness, wrath, clamor, evil speaking, replace it with comfort, peace, and encouragement. Strings still do this today.

In a movie, when they want you to be very uplifted, they kick in the violins and the cellos and the violas, right? It's like, you know, this wonderful thing, it's just, you know, you're wafted up to a new wave of exhilaration by strings. That's what they use strings for. It's ever been this.

There's something about the sound of strings. It can be guitar strings. It can be harp strings.

It can be violins and violas and cellos and basses and all the rest of it. But there is something soothing. It is very like the human voice, but it's wordless and it addresses the emotions.

The choir director, the choir isn't up there singing oohs and aahs. I love those keys on an electronic keyboard, you know, ooh, aah, ooh, aah, ooh, aah, ooh, aah. But they don't say

anything.

The choir director here, there's going to be vocal content. There's going to be lyrics. Here is the instrumental accompaniment that addresses the mind and the heart.

There's going to be content of truth and there is going to be a soothing context. Let the bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away. That's why it's on strings.

Specifically, David says, put this tune out to the public with a choir backed up with strings. There's a purpose in it. There's a reason for it.

And it is a Psalm of David. The rule of thumb is the first 50 Psalms are all by David. But we're specifically told this one is from David.

Why? Why? Why? It reinforces what we just observed in the first two instances. He has the authority as the author of this and as the king to commission how it is performed. Well, that brings us to the content of the Psalm itself, which in Hebrew begins at verse 2. Here it begins in verse 1 in your English.

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness. You have to be pretty cheeky to begin talking to God with an imperative. This is a command.

This is another reason why we're told it's a Psalm of David. David comes before God and gives God a command. This is in the imperative in Hebrew.

In Hebrew it literally says, I am calling. This is bakar, B-A-Q-A-R. And the first word here is, I am calling.

The second word is, answer me. I am calling. Answer me.

This is like dialing somebody up on your phone. Hit the speed dial under the G's. I'm calling.

Pick up. O Lord, this is David. Let me know you're listening.

I am calling. Answer me. Two words in Hebrew with suffixes express that entire thought.

I am calling. Answer me, O God. Elohe.

Tzadiki. Tzadik, T-S-A-D-I-Q, righteousness with the E suffix. I am calling.

Answer me, God of my righteousness. Huge amount of information there. What are the grounds on which David can approach God? God has given him righteousness.

And he says, Lord, you gave me this righteousness, and that allows me to approach. It's the equivalent of the New Testament truth of Hebrews chapter 10. Christ has made a new and living way, so let us approach boldly to the throne of grace, having cleansed our hearts, and so on,

right? I am calling.

Answer me, O Lord, who has given me the righteousness on which I can make this request, the righteousness on which I stand. It says, in trouble you have made a space, is what it literally means. It says, you have relieved me.

We talk about relieving pressure. You know, when someone has a severe concussion and pressure starts building up in their brain, sometimes they actually have to drill a hole in the skull to relieve the pressure so that the brain is not injured? Well, make some space. That's literally what this Hebrew verb means.

You have, in trouble, you have made me some space. What I think this is talking about is, David, in the midst of stress, has a moment when he can go to the Lord. He says, I'm not caught up in having to give orders and make plans and be involved in conversations and things.

You've given me a space here where I can come before you. I can bring this to you. In trouble, you have given me this moment of respite or relief.

You've made space. So have mercy on me and hear my prayer. I am availing myself of this space that you've created in the midst of my distress.

So it's chiastic here. It's a concept sandwich. I am calling, answer me.

I am praying, hear me. You see it? It's a wonderful, very tightly constructed poetic thought here. And in the center of it is the space.

I am calling, answer me. I am praying, hear me. You have made space in the midst of my distress.

And the space is right in the middle of this little chiastic structure. It's just a thing of beauty. I don't have the ability to express how gorgeous this is in Hebrew.

It's the highest poetic level of thought in such an economy of words. It pictures structurally exactly what he is talking about. That first portion is addressed to God directly.

Oh, God of my righteousness. That's the hanger for this beautiful ornament that's got the outside shell and that inner space. The hanger is the righteousness that God has given to David.

He says, God of my righteousness, you have made this space for me. I am calling, answer. I am praying, hear and have mercy.

Verse two, how long, oh, you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame? How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood? Selah. As we have seen, remember earlier in Ephesians how important it was to watch the pronouns? Who's God talking to in verse one? I'm sorry, who's

David talking? Well, there's no point in asking the question now, I just told you. David is talking to God in verse one, right? He is talking to people in verse two.

So the whole psalm is not a prayer. Keep in mind the context now. The choir director has been given this song.

It's a public performance. There are strings backing it up. And so the first set of lines here that are being sung to the congregation by the choir is addressed to God.

And everybody understands because it says, oh Elohim, right at the beginning. I am calling, answer me, oh God. So there are uplifted faces for this first line.

Now, the second one addresses the second set of people. Oh, sons of men. See how the first one is, oh God, and the second one is, oh, sons of men? There's a reason for this.

It is a structure. It is a purposeful arrangement. And it begins, b'nai ish, sons of man, actually.

Sons of man, how long my glory to shame. That's all it says. B'nai ish, admeh, until when, how long, kavod e, my glory, kavod, la kalima, la kalima.

To shame. How long will you treat my glory as shame? Will you talk of my glory as shameful? Will you consider, reflect, convert what is my glory to shame? Now, what is the glory in this context? What's the only thing that's been attributed to David in this psalm thus far? Oh, God of my what? Righteousness. The glory here that he's talking about, this is not his kingly glory, this isn't his musicianship, this isn't his good looks, this isn't his battle accomplishments, it's his righteousness.

Lord, you are the God of my righteousness. I am calling out to you, you sons of men, how long are you going to take my glory, my glory, my righteousness, and call it, treat it as shame? Does this happen today? If you have morals, if you have standards, if you speak out for something, if you stand up for something, if you declare an opinion that certain things are evil, certain things are wrong, and it is the righteousness taught in the scriptures, and you're vilified for it, you're shamed for it, you are called a bigot, you're called all kinds of names. How long, sons of man, will you take my glory which is standing on righteousness from God and treat it as shame? This is David's beef.

This is the stress, this is the distress that causes him to write this song in the first place. How long, you sons of man, he's still talking to him here, will you love what is worthless? Ahav, A-H-A-V, it's a soft B. Ahav, this is the word for love that is used here. Remember? How long will you love reek, that which reeks, R-I-Q here in Hebrew, and it's vanity, emptiness, and seek after cazav.

It's very short and poetic, the until when, the odd myth that we started with, carries through the whole rest of this verse, it's not repeated. We repeat it in English, you'll notice you've got italics there, how long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood? You take all that out, you get

closer to the Hebrew here. So, he says, you sons of man, until when will you, how long are you going to speak of my glory, the righteousness that's reflected in my life because I love and serve God? How long are you going to call that and treat it as shameful, loving vanity, seeking the lie? Loving emptiness and seeking the lie.

This is, David is standing on the righteousness that God has given him. These people don't love righteousness, they love emptiness and they seek the lie. Now think back to Ephesians chapter 4, how did Paul start that out? I beseech you, I urge you, do not walk as the Gentiles walk, how? In the futility of their minds, put away the deception in verse 25, don't walk in reek and put away the cazav.

Paul has this psalm in his mind as he's writing Ephesians chapter 4, it conditions and colors this whole thing. He's thinking back, this is an age old problem, it's a timeless problem. If you try to live for the Lord, people are going to take what is glorious and what is righteous in your life and call it shame and try to shame you and make you ashamed of God's righteousness in your life.

Oh God of my righteousness. When this happens, what is it that David put first in this song? The situation, the distress is people putting pressure on him because the righteousness of God is evident in his life and people are calling it shameful and are trying to make him ashamed. Ever happened to you? It's happened to me, it happens to me, it is happening to me and it is happening to you.

What is the answer? Look at the first verse, go to God. That's why this is given to the assembly, it's common to man, it is certainly common to those who love God. You are going to be treated ill, why? Because people are loving emptiness and they are seeking the lie, that's what conditions they're thinking.

They do not have the righteousness of God, this is the Gentiles, futility of the mind, loving and practicing a lie. Memory of Revelation, outside in the eternal future, outside the walls of the New Jerusalem, after the lake of fire, after the new heavens, new earth, New Jerusalem comes down, wonderful glorious city, streets of gold, gates, all the rest of it, trees bearing the leaves on each side of the river of life and all the wonderful things, in that eternal future with all of that perfection, there is still something outside that isn't great, that isn't perfect. What is it? Outside the walls of the New Jerusalem are dogs, fornicators and among other things those who love and practice the lie.

If we don't shed the lie, if we don't separate ourselves from those who love emptiness and seek the lie, you don't lose your salvation, but look at what you do lose. You're going to be outside and your inheritance and your reward and your opportunities are going to be reflected in the smoke that will evermore ascend from the lake of fire. You can roast marshmallows over your inheritance because that's all there is.

You have no citizenship. You have no access. You've got to wait for somebody to mercifully pick some of the leaves.

You never get to see the tree of life. You don't get to see the throne of glory. You think, wow, how vindictive is that? How dumb are we to not avail ourselves of everything that God has provided for us? Do you think that God's going to take that lightly? Do you think He was just sort of kidding when He put these resources in our hands and within our grasp when the Lord Jesus died to give them to us and we're so apathetic and indifferent and we disregard it? Do you think there's no cost to that? There is a heavy cost and just because you're saved doesn't mean you will not pay a penalty for apathy, indifference, disobedience, loving and practicing the lie.

The church at large today smiles on fornication. There are huge mainstream churches where young teens and people in their 20s and even people older than that that are divorced and they shack up and live together and they are promiscuous and do all these different things and the church doesn't say word one. Well, you know, that's really kind of part of the old Puritan, blah, blah, blah.

Fornicators will be outside because it partakes of the lie. If you try to be virtuous, people will shame you. You're kidding.

Seriously? Virgin? Oh, come on. Wasn't there a movie recently like 40-year-old virgin or something like that? Mocking, having standards, mocking, recognizing the importance of marriage and family and leaving good options open in the future. Mocking it, shaming it.

That's what this is talking about. Then and now. Then and now.

And David, this is why David can go straight to God and without preliminary, without the, you know, Thanksgiving, straight to God. Lord, please listen to me. I need to bring this to you because people are trying to shame me for your righteousness in my life.

That's what Paul has in his mind when he's writing Ephesians and he's pleading with the recipients of that letter, I beseech you, I plead with you, don't fall for the lie. Don't walk like the Gentiles walk in this emptiness that you see here in verse 3, in this verse 2 here, in the futility that characterizes their life. Who are these people to decide what is good and what is bad? What is virtuous and what is shameful? They love emptiness and they pursue deception.

It brings you to the next verse. But he says, Selah, the reason we've concentrated on that, on that set, here's God in heaven. Here's man on earth.

David addresses God in heaven. Then he addresses the sons of man on earth. Then he says, Selah, that means this may have been like a colon at the end of sheet music that says, go back and repeat it.

I want to make sure you get this point. Or it could be an instrumental interlude that gives people the chance to reflect on the words that they just heard. Either way, it is emphatic.

It says, go back and reflect on what you have just heard. It's a very short set of stanzas and David already throws in a Selah. Think about this.

Meditate on it. That's why I have dwelt on it at a bit of length here. Know that the Lord has set apart for himself him who is godly.

The Lord will hear him when I call to him. You see the shift? It's a beautiful piece of poetry. David is thinking about a timeless principle of truth.

Know that the Lord has set apart for himself him who is godly. The Lord will hear when I call to him. Here's the principle.

Here's the application. This is what I know. This is how it pertains to me.

It's just a thing of beauty. Look at verse 4. Be angry and do not sin. What's anger got to do with any of this? I can't believe these cotton-picking lie-lovers are disgracing me and shaming me for virtue, for righteousness, for God in my life.

I can't believe it and it makes me angry. What did David just do in the preceding verse? He took a principle and then he personalized it. Here he's talking to himself and by extension talking to those in the congregation and in the choir who are performing and listening to this song.

Be angry and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed and be still. Let not the sun go down on your wrath.

Why? Because when you get to your bed, you've got this space. Nobody's talking to you when you're in your inner chamber. Nobody's in the process of actively, publicly humiliating and shaming you for the role of God and the righteousness of God in your life.

You're alone, right? You're alone. And in the quietude and the solitude of your reflections and meditations, meditate within your heart on your bed and be still. Quell this righteous indignation and this anger.

Don't let the sun go down on it. Don't carry it over. Don't make it a climate of life.

I'm bitter because people don't understand me. I'm bitter because they keep calling me a prude and they keep doing this and that and the other, trying to make me feel bad about who I am and what I believe. Calm yourself.

And this is in the evening. Evening and morning and at noon while I pray and cry aloud. You'll hear my voice, says David in his evening prayer and he's reflecting and he's calming his soul

because he has the righteousness of God.

Oh, God of my righteousness at the beginning. If I have that righteousness, that creates a responsibility in me to offer the sacrifices of righteousness. I'm an Israelite, not a Canaanite.

I have the privilege of offering sacrifices to God at God's altar. Romans 12, 1 and 2, present yourselves, present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, and be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds that you may know and understand what the will of God is. That's the sacrifice.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your confidence, put your trust, put your faith in the Lord. Take this time on earth, take this situation where you are vilified, misunderstood, embarrassed, and people trying to embarrass, trying to make you ashamed of who you are and what you believe, what you stand for, what you do and do not do, who you do and do not associate with, trying to make that a shame when it is actually a glory. What's going to last? Humans trying to shame you or God glorifying you? This is your eternal perspective.

There's the now and there's everything that comes later. This is a glory that will never fade. This is a righteousness that will never dissolve.

Heaven and earth may pass away, but the Word of God will never pass away. The rewards and blessings from God will never pass away. Why would you trade eternal treasure, eternal inheritance, eternal blessing, privilege and opportunity inside the walls of the New Jerusalem for the cheap, ephemeral, fickle, temporary approval of people who have no standards, who love emptiness and pursue the lie? Their opinion is worth what? And yet we let it get under our skin.

We let it influence us. We try to cultivate approval and acceptance and even fellowship and hail fellow well-met-ness from people who patently love emptiness and who pursue what is false. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord.

There are many who say, who will show us any good? And it sounds like he's talking about these naysayers and these critics. I don't understand it that way, especially when you look at it in Hebrew. Notice the word there and any are in italics.

Take those out. Many say, who will show us good? David says, there are others like me. There are others.

And you see that in the rest of the verse. Watch the change of pronouns. Pronouns mean something in Scripture.

They don't change for no good reason. There are many who say, who will show us tov, genuine good? Not emptiness, not deception. Where is the good? Who will show us? Find a teacher, find a pastor, find a church, find a fellow believer who will speak the truth to me in love.

Who will show me the good? There are many who are seeking the good, who want it shown. And look at the last half of the verse. Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us.

We who have this attitude. I am not alone. I am not the Lone Ranger.

I'm not the last American virgin. I'm not the last person who values integrity. I'm not the last person who refuses to fudge the books or cheat.

I'm not the only one. There are others who want the good to be shown. And here's David praying, Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us.

We, the remnant, the faithful, the persecuted. What is the result? Verse 7, you have put gladness in my heart more than in the season that their grain and wine increased. They had a good harvest.

They were happy, these naysayers. You've put something in my soul that is more permanent, more satisfying, more lasting because it is eternal life. It partakes of that which is eternal.

This is the gift God gives us that the world cannot receive, has no capacity. God wants to pour. They've got no glass.

We do, thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now look at verse 8, should look familiar. As you're on your bed, having addressed the issues of the day, having addressed the persecution and the bad attitude of people who misconstrue your righteousness and try to shame you for it, and on your bed, you remove that anger, you put away the wrath and the malice and the clamor and the evil speaking, returning evil for evil, now what can happen? I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety.

It's interesting that the word alone here has sort of a poetic double-edged sword. You can translate it either way. You alone, Lord, make me to dwell in safety, but it can equally, and I think on purpose, also be translated, for you, Lord, make me dwell in safety alone.

I know these other people are out there and you will smile on us, but even if I can't see them for now, even if I feel isolated, even alone on my bed at night, you make me dwell in safety, because my security, my confidence, my peace comes from the vertical, not the horizontal. Great psalm, isn't it easy to see what was going through Paul's mind as he wrote these verses in Ephesians chapter 4? Well, it is something great for us to reflect on at the close of a tough day, when we've a lot of people problems in particular, in order to lay down in peace and sleep, there is a little bit of a preceding process. When in the evening we pray and cry aloud and we know God is hearing our voice, we bring these things before Him.

And the peace of God that passes all understanding will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. This is something we have as believers in the Lord Jesus that nobody else has. What a

privilege and what a shame, a genuine shame if we miss it, if we pass it by and concern ourselves with, well, what could I say or do tomorrow to make people more impressed with me, to like me better, to accept me, so I can be one of the gang, one of the crowd, one of the crew, you know, go along to get along.

There is a difference, there is a distinction, and it ought to be evidence. If we're a light shining in a dark place, we can't be dark, right? Well, let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You for the powerful and creative ways that You communicate these things to us. They are memorable, they are meaningful. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will keep them in the forefront of our minds in the days ahead, that we can live in a way that is pleasing in Your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray these things in His name. Amen.