
So last week we talked about the foolishness of relying on the futility or the “uselessness” of our own minds and how once we begin to depend upon our own wisdom in any area of our life we quickly venture down the slippery slope that always ends with some form of sensuality: religious sensuality and fleshy sensuality. It is the pathway where our understanding of God becomes darkened and our fellowship with God hindered.

I am hoping that this past week you have had a chance to wrestle with this truth and absorb the radical implications that this passage should have on your life. Remember, there is no area where it is ok to handle things on your own; we are to trust the Lord with all our heart and in all our ways acknowledge Him. We are to not lean on our own understanding and never be wise in our own eyes.

This is one of those areas where every fiber in our body tweaks and we become so uncomfortable even thinking about giving up that much power and authority to an invisible God; yet, taking this step is tantamount to our experiencing the tangibility of God—knowing Him as a person: our friend, our lover, our Lord, our Dad, and our God. If you rely on your own understanding (usually determined by how you feel about something) and if you are wise in your own eyes (usually based on your experiences of the past and what you have learned in this world), then in that area of your life God essentially becomes nothing more than an ideal or an image—akin to a statute to which to pay homage. But you are ignorant of His life and until you open up and yield to His wisdom your experience with “Him” (in that area) winds up being merely your experience with you.

Obviously, this is not the ideal. Jesus did not die on the cross so you could continue to be your own god. If that was the case He could have skipped the

whole become human and die for us thing and just left us alone. But that is not the case; He died for us so that He might live in and through us. He died so He could be Lord of our lives and guide our every step with His wisdom and love.

The Spirit knows that practically applying this in every area of our life is not just scary but very difficult to grasp due to the complexity of life and relationships, so beginning in verse **25** through the end of Chapter **6**, He frames for us how this is to practically play out in our day-in-and-day-out experiences with people (specifically our brothers and sisters in the Lord) in order to put the tangible around what might otherwise seem extremely nebulous and confusing. It's the Spirit's way of deflating the scary monster of the unknown.

Ephesians 4:25

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Now the imperative here is speaking the truth to fellow believers, the reality is that you have already put away falsehood, the motivation is that as brothers and sisters in the Lord we belong to each other, and the implication is that when falsehood is allowed to exist within our relationships we harm ourselves along with those we are supposed to love.

Let me explain, most of us are very nervous about speaking the truth for a number of reasons. Often we are deathly afraid that if we speak the truth the other person will get mad at us, reject us, abandon us, turn on us, and so on. And

at other times we are afraid to speak the truth because we don't like conflict and we definitely do not want anyone to turn the tables on us and speak truth back into our lives. We have a lot that we are hiding and we don't want anyone to know about it or feel as if they have the same freedom to speak into our lives. Besides, most of us desperately want to protect ourselves and the image that we like to portray. However, all of this behavior is an example of walking as the Gentiles walk in the futility of our minds and ultimately leads us down some very dark paths. But one thing for sure, when we live this way we are not living as sons of God who belong to each other.

So what is falsehood? Some translations have translated this as lying. But I don't think that accurately captures the width and breadth of what the Spirit is communicating to us. The underlying Greek word is "*pseudos*" from which we get pseudo which just means a person who makes deceitful pretenses, a deceptive resemblance of what is real, a poseur, a fake, a phony.

Now although the spiritual reality is that we have put away falsehood it is obvious by this admonition that many of us still choose to live in it. So what does it look like for a believer to live in falsehood and essentially be a poseur? I thought about this long and hard and came up with a lot of examples that capture the picture of a spiritual poseur, but then I narrowed it all down to just 3.

- It's when a believer acts as if they actually "know" Jesus by draping themselves in Christian lingo—behaving according to what they think is good and acceptable Christian behavior, adhering to Christian principles and values, and so on even though in reality they have opened up to

Jesus so few doors in the corridors of their soul. And instead of being able to relate to others by *faith* as a result of Jesus bringing healing to the wounds within their soul, they relate to others based on a complex amalgamation of coping mechanisms (including religious ones) which they have perfected in order to survive and deal with the wounds that have been the very foundation upon which they have built their life.

- It's when a believer acts as if they have the wisdom of God and attempts to speak into your life when in reality it is not Him at all but it is just their spin on how to navigate this life all wrapped up nicely in "God talk" even though they personally have limited experience with God actually being the "I Am" or the Lord of their life.
- It's when a believer acts as if they legitimately love you (demonstrated by acts of affection, attention, kindness, and so on) even though the relationship is really about loving themselves, stroking their ego, and being needed. Because they have not trusted themselves to Jesus they do not overflow with His agape love but can only give you what they have which is a selfish love.

I think those 3 pretty much capture what it looks like when a believer lives in falsehood and is in effect a spiritual poseur—a deceptive resemblance of one who lives by faith.

Now, the good news is that falsehood is not part of our new self (our *New Creation*) which has been created in the image of God, righteous, holy and true (**v.**

24). Falsehood is an attribute of our *old sinful nature* whose power to control us and force us to do his will was severed when we became born-again and received our *new self*.

Think of it this way, our mind/soul was inseparable from our *old sinful nature*—they were one—therefore we were dominated and subjected to its will. But when we became born-again this *old sinful nature* was literally cut away (circumcised) from our mind/soul (**Romans 2:28-29; Colossians 2:11; Philippians 3:3**) and was “cast off” like an old filthy garment or “put away.” The implication of this truth is that our *old sinful nature* no longer has the power to dominate us at will or force us to do anything; rather, we are free to choose to believe God and live from our *new self* in Christ.

However, even though it was “cast off” it was not thrown away in the sense that it is still part of our life in this flesh (**Galatians 5:17**) and will be until we die (**1 Corinthians 15**). This is why we can still pick up the clothes of this defeated foe and once again drape ourselves in his covering. And we do this when we choose to live according to the futility of our own minds and do not trust ourselves wholly to Jesus. But regardless of what we do or have done, the reality is that it has been “cast off” which means that you literally (not figuratively) have the power to live free from its demand on your life.

This brings us back around to faith. As we have discussed many times, true Biblical faith is when we **actively** choose to believe the truth—when we bet our lives on all that God has said about us and Himself. Therefore, in the context of our relationships with one another, being **active in our faith** (or to say it another way, to “put on” the *New Creation* and “put away” the *old sinful nature*), means

that we take off our masks, strip ourselves of pretense, and choose to speak the truth to one another regardless of the risk and despite what we think or feel.

So let's frame this idea of speaking the truth and contrast it with being a spiritual poseur. But before we do that let's refresh our memory of some critical truths. **4:1-2** said that we must walk in a manner worthy of our calling—in humility. This means that to live as a son of God we absolutely must have the proper estimation of ourselves.

Follow me on this. **2:1** said that before we received our *new self* we were just dead men who followed the devil in all our ways. **2:11-12** said that in this condition we were completely alienated from the life of God. This is who we were when we were led by our *old sinful nature* and it is what we now experience when we give ourselves to our *old sinful nature*. Thus, having the proper estimation of ourselves, living in humility, walking in a manner worthy of our calling, occurs when we become fully convinced that everything that does not come from our *new self* is entirely worthless.

Let me state it another way, we are spiritual poseurs and have a pseudo faith when we live as if we have anything good, on our own, to offer anyone or act as if we have anything to protect (like some image that we work hard to preserve or some twisted need to always be liked by others). Now we all do this to some extent. We all try very hard to control what others might think about us; but it is not how one lives as a son of God.

That is why having become convinced that only God is good (**Mark 10:18**) has been a truth that has brought me tremendous freedom. I have come to realize that I don't have to strive to be good or try to manage what others think of me. I

also don't have to conform to any sort of "image" that is expected of me (despite what title I might hold); but I can be who I am in Christ and not get caught up in trying to portray and protect an image.

I can actually be honest about what I am like when I choose to live from my *old sinful nature* and I don't have to try and hide it and somehow pretend that what is sick and evil is really good. Besides, it all just proves how much I must depend upon Jesus for all things. Moreover, what's the point of pretending? Everyone ultimately knows if I am or am not being legit as the fruit which flows from my life, as it is played out in my relationships, tells the real story anyway. Over time people either experience God's agape love flowing through me or they experience all manner of religious and fleshy sensuality—there really is no middle ground.

And because I can be real about who I am without Christ I can be bold and even boastful about who I am in Christ (**1 Corinthians 1:21**). I don't have to hide what I have become or be afraid of ridicule and scorn. I am God's workmanship and His marvelous and beautiful creation; this is something in which I should always rejoice. And instead of ever speaking about what I "can't do" I can speak about what has already been done for me and in me as well as the crazy things yet to be done through me. I am to speak about all the amazing truths which the godhead has spoken over my life—all that we learned in **Chapters 1-3**. This is also why self loathing or self deprecating kind of talk should have no place in my life. I am a new creation in Christ and my old worthless self needs to be of no interest to me.

I am to be in relationship with other believers fully grounded in who I am in my *new self* and not from that old weak foundation of fear and insecurity. Therefore, I am to speak the truth knowing that God has my back, that He is in control of the

outcomes, and that He is the one responsible for others and not me; thus, their response is not something I have to try and control. I can live in freedom because I know He loves me and I am safe. Even if speaking in truth leads to a big loud conflict, even if the other persons gets mad at me, rejects me, abandons me, leaves me, and so on, He won't. I am accepted in Christ and I always have a glad welcome in the throne room of my Father.

Besides, I can rest knowing that He will take even the most painful situation and work all things according to the kind intention of His will. So I am not really at risk; it just seems that way. This is why I have to remember that feelings are just that feelings, they don't form my reality. In addition, thoughts are just thoughts; they also do not form my reality. My reality is formed by every word that has been spoken by the mouth of God over my life. So although people can hurt me and will hurt me, I can find comfort, strength, and hope in Jesus for His love will never fail me.

Besides, we belong to one another. We are family. We should not be living with all this dishonesty and dysfunction for it makes us weak. We need to get over our egos, lay aside the falsehood, and relish in the fact that everything that comes from our *old self* is entirely worthless and everything that comes from our *new self* is absolutely beautiful and something worth sharing with each other. Moreover, it is simply too much work to keep up the pretense and it is not really worth it anyways; it's exhausting. We need to be done with our striving and living in fear and anxiety always working so hard to protect that which is entirely worthless. We need to learn that love will take the risk; love will speak the truth.

Ephesians 4:26-27

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

Did that really say what I thought it said; I can be angry. Wait a minute, I thought a good Christian was not supposed to be angry and that being angry at someone was not love. Well guess again! Yes, it is ok to be angry. In fact, it is entirely normal and natural. Anger is one of the emotions that God gave us and one we share with Him; as such, it is not something to be suppressed, ignored, or shut down, but it is to be a normal part of our relationships. After all, if we are honest and are willing to speak the truth, we would have to say that there are many times where people, as well as the normal happenings of life, make us angry.

Think about anger in the context of falsehood and living as a Christian with pseudo faith. Not all of us, but many of us, have been taught that anger is bad and we have learned how to not act as if we are angry and try and portray an image that we are these godly loving people who have no place for anger. But this is wrong and dysfunctional. Anger has its proper place in our lives and in our relationships and is actually a sign of a healthy relationship.

Now, I want to clarify something. Anger is different than wrath and in this passage the Spirit used two entirely different words to capture the difference, even though in the ESV both are translated as anger. It should read: Be angry [orgizo] and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath [parorigismos].

When we are angry we are provoked, enraged, and become exasperated with what is happening to us. Feelings of anger are real and they cannot be ignored; they must be dealt with in the light of truth and they need to be expressed. Sometimes that expression is toward the person or the situation that makes us angry and sometimes it is straight to God. But either way, they are not to be ignored as they will not be ignored—they will have their day in court so to speak; it's just a matter of time. If we hold them in or suppress these feelings they will come back to haunt us with a vengeance either we will become shut down and unable to open ourselves up to anyone or else we will become a vessel of wrath and rage. Both of which are horrible outcomes.

You see wrath is quite different from anger. Wrath is what happens when our anger takes the dark side in terms of expression and we erupt, we rage, we become indignant, hateful, vengeful, and bring harm to another emotionally, psychologically, or even physically. Wrath is not good and for a son of God its expressions are never justified.

So we are instructed to be angry and yet to not sin and not let the sun go down on our wrath. Let's consider the imagery and then what this practically looks like. What happens when the sun goes down? The world is engulfed in darkness. If you dwell in your anger long enough (no matter how legitimate the underlying offense might be) and within your soul it gets tucked away from the light of the truth found in Jesus, then it will be overcome with darkness and it will mutate and twist and pervert and become something very ugly.

You see we may get angry at people and have it out with them—and that is ok—but ultimately every offense needs to be taken to the Son. Every offense

needs to be held up to the light of God's love and the truth that He is involved in the details of our life directing the steps of all those who belong to Him. Therefore, nothing which comes into our lives is a result of randomness and in everything which He has allowed, He will be there to work all things out according to the kind intention of His will such that we become conformed into the image of Christ (***Psalm 37:23; Ephesians 1:11; Romans 8:29-30***).

With this as our frame of reference, we can take the things that make us mad to the Lord and find both our release and our comfort in Him. We can even be angry at God for allowing the events into our lives—it's ok, it really is. Besides, He knows what we think and feel as He has examined our hearts and knows everything about us anyways (***Psalm 139:1-2***). So even if we don't verbalize our anger towards Him, He knows it is there; we might as well express it and purge it from our body. But we always need to know and land on the truth that all that He allows in our lives is an expression of His love for us as He is our Good Shepherd. If we take all our offenses to Him, and if we pass all our anger through the filter of His love, then the darkness will not be able to overtake our wrath.

However, if we don't choose to view things through the filter of God's intimate love for us, then we have no healthy way to process the things that make us angry. As a result, everything just snowballs and given enough time and enough reasons to be angry (which we all eventually have), we become filled with wrath and we either want to hurt people, hurt ourselves, or just shut down altogether and refuse to feel—which is just a passive aggressive way to hurt others.

Wrath is ugly and always harmful and it does things and says things in an attempt to deeply hurt the other person. It attacks a person's character, it attacks

their reason for existence, it attacks their personal flaws, it attacks their physical flaws, it attacks their wounds, it attacks their weaknesses, it attacks their vulnerabilities, it attacks how they say things, how they think, how they process things in a conflict, and it attacks anything and everything so long as there is a sense of retribution that is handed out to the other person.

And we do not want the sun to go down on our wrath because even if we are sinning and are emoting wrath towards another, we do not want it to become settled in our soul; rather, we want to be able to seek forgiveness and restoration of our relationships. But if it settles in our soul, I guarantee you that there will be plenty of destruction and it won't be limited to the one(s) who were the primary cause of the harm.

For example, I did not really have a framework of truth in which to pass a lot of the harm that I experienced during my 22 years of marriage and so I stuffed it all away and shut the doors locking the pain deep inside where it must have been festering and mutating even though I was not really aware of what was happening. Honestly, I really had no understanding of how to process all that happened to me. I was mad at God (furious actually); but, as a good little Christian boy, I did not think that was allowed, so I just stuffed it down as well.

And after Stacey left and God started knocking on those doors within my soul, all sorts of ugly and harmful stuff started to fly out of my body; and strangely enough, it was not directed at Stacey but at those whom I love the most—those who just happened to be the ones who were making me mad at that time. Poor Sarah, Jessica and Andrea; for a period of time they were the objects of my wrath and took the brunt of what did not belong to them. Yes, they made me mad and

my anger was legitimate for they really did hurt my feelings in all sorts of ways; but they were totally undeserving of my wrath. The reaction did not fit the offense. Thank God that we were collectively able to bring the light of God's truth to bear on all those events and God worked healing in all of us. I often just praise Jesus that we did not let the sun go down on my wrath, but collectively we let His light of truth bring instruction, correction, and forgiveness and we are stronger today than ever before.

Wrath is very demonic. **John 10:10** says that the devil desires only to harm us, steal from us, to destroy and kill us. So when the sun goes down on our wrath we behave just like the devil and his evil minions. We align our intentions with his intentions and we seek to destroy and harm others. This is why we are told to give no opportunity or no territory to the devil.

In the Greek, the word translated opportunity is "*topos*" from where we get our word topography. In other word, when we let the sun go down on our wrath we give up room in our hearts to the devil. If only we could see what was happening in the spiritual realms; I am sure we would be totally sickened. As the sun goes down you can almost picture Jesus being evicted from those rooms as we let the enemy enter in and make his residence within our soul. You can almost hear the doors slam shut and the locks turn as the enemy digs in and begins to reign in our lives.

What's more, getting him out of there is not easy task and will take an act of violence. This is what Jesus was talking about when He said: "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house (**Matthew 12:29**). If we let the

sun go down on our wrath, we will have to violently evict the enemy from our heart so that the Lord can have His proper place and believe you me that will not be a pretty fight. It will be hard core and intense and I guarantee you it will impact every one of your relationships.

Now, unlike wrath, anger deals with the issues of conflict and the reasons why we were hurt. Anger and hurting another are not synonymous; anger does not have to be about personal attacks—that is wrath. Please, don't be confused by the fact that when a person is angry they may express things in a loud and vocal manner or with great intensity. In fact, anger is a loud and intense emotion and so we should expect it to be emoted as such; it's entirely normal.

Now I know it all differs based on our individual wiring, but for those of us who are intense and very emotional (it's a Latin thing), it will probably be loud and intense more often than not; and that is not in and of itself sin. But in love we can also learn how to be softer and less intense, especially towards those whom we know have horrible experiences with the wrathful form of uncontrolled anger.

I know that most of you have experienced wrath, and so you have a hard time separating loud and intense anger from your memories of things that were so terrible and horrific. But there is a difference and we must let the light of God's truth instruct us and correct us in this area.

Anger is not a bad thing because ultimately it is an act of love. Anger in its purest sense is about building up, restoring and preserving relationships. A person needs to know how they have hurt you and what they have done wrong. They need an opportunity to repent and seek forgiveness and to learn how to do things differently or how to be more sensitive in areas that are uniquely sensitive to you.

They also need an opportunity to let the light of God's truth come into their own being so they can seek the Lord and grow in love.

So anger is helpful and necessary for it is largely educational. And if a person really loves you and cares for you, they will consider how they have acted toward you and they will seek the Lord about doing it different. If they don't, then your outlet must be Jesus and only Jesus; but whatever you do, you cannot let the sun go down on your anger. Besides, if you don't express your anger and communicate about the source of your hurt, I guarantee that you will shut down and eventually over time erupt in wrath towards someone who does not deserve it.

You might be thinking that you absolutely hate conflict as all you have ever seen is damage and destruction so you don't even want to go there. You may hate loud and intense expressions because of the hurt and violence to which you have been exposed. I understand that and I have strong emotion about the pain each of you have experienced; but we cannot live from the futility of our own minds and make decisions like this from our own wisdom and our own experiences. We need to have the mind of Christ in these things and trust His wisdom for our lives—even if it feels very scary and even if right now it does not make sense to us. We must let the Word of God be authoritative over our lives.

You may be thinking that the other person should know that they have hurt you—especially if it is in an area where you have discussed things before. You may be thinking they should be able to tell by your body language and reaction. But that is so unfair and it is not love. You can't assume those things; and, when you do, you are just reacting in a passive aggressive destructive manner that is an expression of wrath and not anger.

You may be thinking that it is easier to just suck it up and swallow hard and be the bigger person, but that is simply impossible; it is a lie of the devil. Here is something I have learned: God is “Jehovah Rapha”—the God who heals—He is the only one who can heal our infirmities (*Exodus 15:26; Psalm 103:3*). We can put bandages on our wounds through many different means, but they truly never heal until His hands bring the healing. This is why I said that every offense ultimately needs to be taken up with God and examined under the umbrella of His love and sovereignty over our lives. This is also why we have been talking about our need to go room by room within the corridors of our soul and open up the doors and let Jesus in so we can have a conversation with Him about each and every wound.

Imagine, we all have these open sores and wounds and from everything that has happened to us and for most of us they are extremely infected. Thus, we need to attend to them. Getting angry and communicating with a person, or with God, about these things is a way to keep the wound from getting infected if it is a fresh wound and it is a way to purge the infection if it is an old wound. But then we still have to turn to our healer as Jesus is the only one who can make us whole.

And what we do in this area of our life cannot be dependent upon how others react or how we fear others will react. We can never be assured that someone is going to handle things appropriately. They may be able, in the Spirit, to receive our expressions of anger as love and as necessary to the relationship and deal with it accordingly; but there is also a good chance they may deal with it in the flesh and just cause another wound. We have no guarantees; but that should not stop us from getting angry.

The text says: “be angry” and it is an imperative—a command. So we cannot

make our decision to express or not express anger based on a presumption of how someone might handle things (even if they have done it wrong so many times in the past). We cannot let fear and insecurity rule our life or else we will live in falsehood and hold to a pseudo faith. We must make our decisions based on what Jesus asks us to do which, believe it or not, is for the benefit of the overall relationship. Therefore we must speak the truth because we belong to one another and get angry but not sin.

There is one other point I want to make about holding in our anger. It is very dangerous when we become shut down and unable to feel. Remember, those feelings do not dissipate, they do not go away, they just get stuffed and locked behind one of the doors in our soul. There they fester and fester and eventually even the most mild mannered of us will blow in one way shape or form and it is not always pointed outward. Sometimes it is emoted through rebellion, self harm, or self destructive behavior, including suicidal type behavior. In fact, the reason people turn to alcohol, drugs, anorexia, bulimia, compulsive eating, cutting, and who knows what else, is because their wrath has turned inward as they have never been able to express it outward.

So my point is that wrath always finds an outlet one way or another. It may be pointed outward, inward or both, but over time it will be released and it will unleash a destructive wave of pain. So we must never let the sun go down on our wrath.

So anger is a good thing and ultimately is about building up and preserving relationships. On the other hand, wrath is always harmful and destructive and it gives Satan territory in our soul which is the one thing we do not want to do. We

want to bind the strongman and rob him of his possessions and take back the territory that rightfully belongs to Jesus.

I know that this teaching might be very disturbing to many of you as it will require a total revamping of how you have chosen to deal with people in relationships and how you have chosen to protect yourself. But all of that needs to go as it is not from God but is from the futility and uselessness of our own minds. As I said before, we have to trust that God knows what He is doing and His instruction is for our good. “For the word of the Lord holds true, and everything He does is worthy of our trust” (***Psalm 33:4***). “Everything He does reveals His glory and majesty.” “All He does is just and good” (***Psalm 111:3,7***). “The Lord is righteous in everything He does; He is filled with kindness” (***Psalm 145:17***).

Thus, we can believe Him when He tells us to be angry and we can be open to others when they have a reason to be angry at us. We just need to learn to communicate in all things and speak the truth to each other in love for we are members one of another.

Let's Pray