

Daily Devotional, September 2, 2020 Control Under Fire

“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Ephesians 4:26-27

Anger is such an ugly emotion. Even *righteous* anger can wear us down, depriving us of a sense of peace that can keep us up at night if we let it consume us. Whether we are weary of the local and national news or the stress from the Covid-virus that inhabits our personal lives, allowing the tension to evolve into anger, may creep into the corners of our mind and drive us to act out in ways that we will regard as regrettable.

Some traditional wisdom tells us that anger is a feeling to be avoided at all costs. Not only will it damage your image as a person, but it can destroy relationships. As a youngster, I was always taught not to be angry or raise my voice, something that as a child is nearly impossible to do. Yet, anger can be dangerous and unpredictable, like the spreading of a fire, so I tried my best to reign it in. I wonder how many children nearly bit off the tips of their tongues while gritting their teeth in an attempt to keep their composure (or cracked a few teeth)? Unaddressed anger can often turn into sorrow, jealousy, and other negative emotions, besides the way that it can affect your health and even make you look years older.

It may surprise us to read the words of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians: “In your anger”. It is as if he is saying, “Be angry”. Let yourself experience anger. Our anger is trying to tell us something, so own it. But the challenge here is to be angry without sinning. In other words, do not be tempted to lash back out at the other person and take revenge. There is righteous anger, anger at the injustices we see, but we must become well versed in knowing the difference between righteous anger and to “give the devil a foothold”. When we let anger fester overnight, and to continue to roil for days, weeks, months, and even years, it can control us and break down not only relationships, but entire communities. It can steal our peace. It can also steal the peace of those around us who become the targets of our hateful emotions.

While anger is often the catalyst of social change, it is not a sustainable energy source. Like fire, it burns through us quickly and leaves us in ashes. It must be fire under control. Paul’s words remind us to connect to the True Source of Life, Christ, through Whom we have been granted new life, and in whom we find our peace.

Be angry– but don’t give the devil a foothold!

Prayer: Oh Lord, guardian of my consciousness, bring peace to my mind and my heart as I feel angry at the situations I fall into and those who I allow to raise contempt in my heart. May I take hold of your promise that you will never leave me nor forsake me. In whatever circumstances I face that produce anger in my heart, fill me with the calm that reminds me you have not left my side and you never will. When you are with me, I can trust you to help me fight my battles, and to remind me that I do not need to allow anger to take control. Give me your peace Father, may it rule over my life. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.