

Ephesians 4:25–32 | “Putting Off, Putting On, Part 2: Anger”

Preached on September 7, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 4:25–32 today, as we continue part two of this section in God’s Word. *[pausee]*

We have been looking at Paul’s practical examples of what it looks like to put off the old way of life we had, and to put on the new way of life in Christ. *[pause]*

Last week, we saw all about what we are to do when it comes to our *words*, and today, we will be looking at what to do with our *anger*. *[pauseeee]*

Anger is everywhere. *[pause]*

All you have to do is scroll on social media and read a ‘comment’ section, and you’ll probably see it present. *[pauseeee]*

Let’s say that you don’t have the internet, well you don’t have to go far, either...

Walk outside of your house, and maybe you’ll see your neighbors angry with each other for some reason. *[pause]*

If that’s not the case, then get into your car and drive somewhere.

For as you’re driving along, someone might get mad at you for not driving the way that they wanted, and you’ll see this thing called “road rage.” *[pauseeee]*

Now let’s say that you didn’t experience any road rage unleashed towards you while driving, then just enter a business...

You might see a customer yelling at another customer for butting ahead in line, or a customer chewing out an employee for some sort of problem or inconvenience that they experienced. *[pauseeee]*

Now let’s just say that you went through all of those situations unscathed from this emotion called ‘anger,’ well don’t you fret, for just head over to your workplace. *[pause]*

You might be working along, and all of sudden, another employee is either mad at you or mad at another employee.

And if that’s not the case, then they are probably mad at the boss or the management. *[pauseeee]*

Now let’s just imagine that you have made it through all of those situations without experiencing any anger. *[pause]*

You didn’t see anything on social media, you didn’t see your neighbors angry, you weren’t a victim of road rage, nor did you see it at a place of business, or even the workplace.

Well just head back home, and spend the rest of the day with your family. *[pause]*

You may very likely see some anger demonstrated, for some angry tones and angry words may be thrown around.

And even if it's not super evident, anger might be displayed as a seething anger, or an anger that reveals itself in "the silent treatment." *[pauseeee]*

Is it there? Even a little bit? [pauseeeee]

Now it's very unlikely that you didn't witness any anger at all from those places, but let's just say that that's the case...

You didn't see anger online, nor out and about, nor even among your family members, so I want you to look at one more place to see if it's there—look inward. *[pause]*

Search the recesses of your heart, and look for any traces of anger, for you may very well find it there. *[pause]*

Maybe not right now, but it's probably been there in the recent past or will be in the near future. *[pauseeeee]*

The truth is that anger is prevalent, whether it be in our hearts, in our interactions with family members, friends, co-workers, or strangers, or even just out and about in the world.

So what does Paul say here about anger in Ephesians 4? [pause]

Let's READ verses 26–32 to find out. *[READ]*

The first thing that we see about our anger is found in verses 26–27, and it's this...

I. What to do with righteous anger—deal with it quickly! (26–27)

Now some of you may be shocked that I even said the phrase, "righteous anger." *[pause]*

You might be thinking, "What?! Is there even such a thing?"

Yes, there is such a thing as righteous anger. *[pause]*

An indication that there is righteous anger is found here in our text, for Paul says, "Be angry and do not sin." *[pause]*

Isn't that interesting? It's possible to be angry and *not* sin. *[pause]*

Now I don't believe that Paul is commanding us to be angry in the sense of, "Be angry! Make sure you look for ways to do this!"

No, no—I believe it's more so the idea of, "When you are angry, do not sin." *[pauseeee]*

There is definitely *unrighteous* anger, for we will see that later, for Paul tells us to put it away, but there is also righteous anger, too. [pauseeee]

In various places in Scripture, we see that God is angry, but His anger is *always* righteous, just, controlled, and He's slow to get there. [pause]

In Deuteronomy 9:8, Moses explains the anger of God at the golden calf incident.

And he says, "Even at Horeb you provoked the Lord to wrath, and the Lord was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you." [pauseeee]

We also see the anger of Jesus in the Gospels...

He was angry when he drove out the money changers in the temple.¹

And when the Pharisees refused to answer Him about whether it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath or not, the text says...

"And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart."² [pauseeee]

If you look at the examples of righteous anger in the Bible...

You see that it's present due to a deep love for God and others, it's caused by sin, focused on those who know better, and is always meant to bring correction and restoration. [pause]

So yes, there is a righteous anger that isn't sin, but most often our anger doesn't fit into that category.

And more often than not, even our anger that *starts out* as righteous travels quickly over into unrighteous anger. [pauseeee]

That's why Paul felt the need to say something about righteous anger here...

He's telling us, "When you are angry, do not sin." [pause]

Put another way, "Don't let your anger *turn* into sin!" [pauseeee]

Yes, there will be times when you feel righteously angry over sin, but realize the inherent danger on the horizon.

And the reason is because anger is *volatile*. [pause]

Righteous anger is like rubbing alcohol—it may be harmless in small, controlled amounts, but watch out, for it's extremely flammable! [pauseeee]

Listen to Paul's instructions right after saying, "Be angry and do not sin"...

¹ A reference to John 2:13ff.

² Mark 3:5.

He says, “Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.”
[pauseeee]

So what is Paul’s instruction as to how to control righteous anger, so that it doesn’t turn into sin?

Deal with it quickly! [pausee]

This shows us that the problem is when we let righteous anger go in our hearts, and do not deal with it promptly, it can lead to sin. [pausee]

So yes, at times you will be righteously angry, but be careful—sin is lurking close by, so deal with it quickly! [pauseeee]

In 1994, an Associated Press reporter described how bombs from all the way back in World War II were still killing people in Europe. [pause]

He said, “They turn up—and sometimes blow up—at construction sites, in fishing nets, or on beaches fifty years after the guns fell silent.” [pause]

He relayed that, “Thirteen old bombs exploded in France [in 1993], killing twelve people and wounding eleven.”³ [pauseeeee]

Righteous anger is like that—it’s a ticking timebomb, defuse it quickly before it explodes!
[pauseeee]

What could happen if you let righteous anger dwell in you too long? It can turn into resentment.
[pause]

Your heart starts to become bitter at the person or situation, for you just keep ruminating upon it.
[pauseeee]

Righteous anger let go could also lead you to say some harsh, sinful words.

And that’s why you must deal with it quickly—so be *slow* to get angry, and *quick* to deal with it.
[pauseeee]

Paul says, “Do not let the sun go down on your anger.”

Now that’s quick, isn’t it? [pause]

Before the day ends, before you lay down to sleep, make sure you have dealt with your anger.
[pause]

This shows us an important truth—as much as is possible, do not go to bed angry. [pause]

³ “Wars’ Lethal Leftovers Threaten Europeans,” by Christopher Burns. Found at: <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustrations/anger>.

Just imagine how many marriage conflicts would be worked out, if that was practiced! *[pause]*

Determine in your marriage that as much as you can, you will talk through the problem with your spouse and seek reconciliation before bed. *[pauseeee]*

Imagine also just the relief of not going to bed angry.

To be able to sleep well, and not toss and turn in anger, is a blessing of following God's way. *[pauseeee]*

You see, our natural tendency is to stew in our anger, not to seek to extinguish it.

But we should be like firefighters when it comes to our anger—rushing to douse the sparks of anger before the sun goes down. *[pauseeee]*

What's another reason why anger should be dealt with quickly?

Anger let go gives the devil an opportunity to work. *[pauseeee]*

I don't think that we often think about this point when we are angry. *[pause]*

We don't calmly think, "If I stew more in anger, I'm giving the devil a prime opportunity to do his work." *[pause]*

Instead, we just fume in anger, and make excuses as to why we are justified in being and staying angry.

Yet we must realize reality—we can either give the devil an opportunity to do his work, or we can not give it to him. *[pauseeee]*

So holding onto your anger is like gifting the devil with an opportune circumstance to work his schemes. *[pauseeee]*

When a Christian holds onto anger, the devil's eyes get big in excitement over what just opened up for him.

You just gave him room to work, a favorable circumstance. *[pauseeee]*

He uses that anger in you by tempting you to become bitter or resentful. *[pause]*

He uses that anger in you to tempt you to lash out with hurtful words or with malicious revenge, and so much more.

And the more that these things occur, the harder it is for forgiveness and reconciliation to happen, and unity disintegrates. *[pause]*

This can all lead to destroyed relationships, and one of the devil's favorite things to do is to seek the destruction of relationships. *[pauseeee]*

Do not open yourself up to danger by holding onto anger—deal with it quickly! *[pauseeee]*

What a difference it would make in our lives, if we remembered the dangerous nature of anger, and how volatile it can be. *[pause]*

What if we continually worked to deal with our anger right away, and didn't dwell upon it? *[pause]*

What if we remembered that letting anger stew was opening up a door for the devil? *[pauseeee]*

Instead of focusing more on how much you were wronged, focus on how much danger anger let go can have. *[pause]*

Instead of thinking of ways to get revenge, or ways that you are justified in your feelings, think of ways to extinguish the anger that you feel. *[pauseeee]*

Deal with your anger by calmly and graciously talking with the person, who made you angry, seeking reconciliation. *[pause]*

Deal with your anger also by taking it to the Lord, and laying it at His feet, knowing that He knows what happened, and can handle the justice part. *[pauseeee]*

When you deal with your anger before the sun goes down, you give the devil no opportunity to do his work.

So Christians are people who may feel righteous anger at times, but they are those who deal with righteous anger quickly. *[pauseeee]*

Imagine the number of conflicts with others that would be resolved, if we followed this practice. *[pause]*

Imagine the bitterness and resentment dwindling down in us, and the sinful words and actions lessening.

And what greater unity we could have among us, and what more inner peace! *[pauseeee]*

So deal with righteous anger quickly, but next...

II. What to do with unrighteous anger—put it away! (31–32)

In verse 31, Paul says, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.” *[pause]*

Here we see Paul's command for what to do with any sinful or unrighteous anger—put it away! *[pauseeee]*

Instead of putting away anger, don't we usually try to excuse it, instead? *[pause]*

“In one Peanuts cartoon Lucy says to Charlie Brown, ‘I hate everything. I hate everybody. I hate the whole wide world!’ [pause]

Charlie says, ‘But I thought you had inner peace.’

[And] Lucy replies, ‘I do have inner peace. But I still have outer obnoxiousness.’”⁴ [pauseeee]

Like Lucy, we act like our outward anger towards others is fine, as long as we are inwardly OK, but it’s not. [pause]

Here’s another illustration...

“A lady once came to Billy Sunday and attempted to rationalize her angry outbursts. [pause]

She said, ‘There’s nothing wrong with losing my temper. I blow up, and then it’s all over.’ [pause]

Mr. Sunday replied, ‘So does a shotgun, and look at the damage it leaves behind!’”⁵ [pauseeee]

Like that lady, we excuse our “blow up’s” and act like they are justified because it’s over and done with, but that’s not true. [pauseeee]

Think of all the excuses we try to make for our anger...

We say, “But do you know what they did to me?! What I did back isn’t *nearly* as bad!” [pause]

We say, “It was just a *small* outburst of anger, it didn’t do too much damage.” [pause]

Or we say, “I was just tired from a long day, and that’s why I did it.”

Yes, that may help explain why you were more easily tempted to anger, but it does not *excuse it*. [pauseeee]

No longer make excuses for your sinful anger—put it away! [pauseeee]

Another thing that we do is that we see our anger as “not that big of a deal,” but it is a bigger deal than we think—it is sin. [pause]

We are too *easy* on our sinful anger, but that’s not the approach that the Lord calls us to take when it comes to our anger.

So do not try to justify, nor be easy on your unrighteous anger, but seek to *put it away*. [pause]

That word ‘put away’ has the idea of removing something or taking it away—it’s not about putting it away in a drawer for later. [pause]

⁴ Found at: <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustrations/anger>.

⁵ Original source: *Soul Prescription* by Bill Bright and Henry Brandt. Found at: <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustrations/anger>.

No, we should take our anger so seriously that we seek to remove it as if it were something *toxic*.
[pauseeee]

Is that the way you think of and handle the anger that you feel?

Do you see it as something to be removed right away, and put far away from you? [pause]

Do not hold it close, keep it simmering, or let it linger in any way, shape, or form. [pause]

In fact, look at how the verse says to let “all” of it be put away, and it even reemphasizes the “all” idea by saying, “along with *all* malice.” [pause]

Do not let any form of sinful anger around, but put it away.

Say, “No, I’m not going to do this. I don’t want *anything* to do with this!” [pauseeee]

This week, this text was on my mind, and there was a situation with a stranger that made me catch myself. [pause]

Someone did something rude, and my initial reaction was to become angry with them and to dwell on how rude they were.

But then I remembered this text, and I determined in my mind and heart to put the anger away from me. [pause]

Yes, they were rude, and I don’t have to act like they didn’t do anything, but I should not be sinfully angry.

I should put it away from me, and show grace amidst what happened. [pauseeeee]

Is there sinful anger in your heart that you need to put away?

Seek to do that in the power of the Spirit. [pauseeee]

Notice also all of the different *forms* of anger that Paul lists: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice.

Every form of sinful anger needs to be put away, not just one form. [pause]

So don’t say, “Well it’s not slander, it’s just bitterness, that’s all.” [pause]

Don’t say, “It’s not malice, it’s just a little bit of anger.” [pause]

No, every form of sinful anger in your life needs to be ‘put off’, and what should we ‘put on’ in its place?

We are to “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,” as verse 32 says.
[pauseeee]

Instead of being angry people, Christians are to be kind, tender, and forgiving people. *[pause]*

What a drastic difference that is!

Think about interacting with an angry person, and now think about interacting with a kind, tender, and forgiving person—who would *you* want to be around? *[pause]*

Of course, the kind and forgiving person because they are so loving, compassionate, gentle, and merciful to you. *[pauseeee]*

The angry person is a “me-first” person and it leads to hostility, conflict, and separation, but the kind, tender, and forgiving person is an “others-first” person, and it leads to relational blessing. *[pauseeee]*

You see, we don’t just magically no longer struggle with anger, and exude kindness—rather, it’s a continual, daily, Spirit-empowered effort at living for Christ.

It’s a repeated motion of putting off anger, and putting on kindness. *[pause]*

Is that your mindset and approach to life? *[pause]*

Do you put away anger, knowing it’s aligned with your old, pre-Christ lifestyle?

And do you put on kindness and forgiveness, knowing it aligns with Christ? *[pauseeeee]*

Our normal tendency when someone makes us upset is to get angry, get them back, hold a grudge, or complain to others.

But what does God call us to do? Be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving. *[pause]*

This is not an option, Christian—this is a command!

God Almighty commands you to put away anger and to be kind to people and forgive them—so to not do so is to *sin* against God and His clear and plain Word. *[pauseeee]*

This statement has no qualifications—you must forgive.

So you can’t think, “Well, my situation is different. I don’t have to forgive,” no, you are to forgive one another. *[pauseeeee]*

There’s one more line in this text that I haven’t touched on, but it’s so vital to the whole thing...

Paul says that we are to forgive one another, “as God in Christ forgave you.” *[pauseeee]*

God’s forgiveness of us is both our motivation and model to forgive others. *[pause]*

Since God forgave us our sins in Christ, then we should forgive one another.

But also, *just as* God forgave us, so we are to reflect His character and work of forgiveness.
[pauseeee]

We sinned against the good, gracious, and holy God and Creator of all—we deserved death, condemnation, and eternal shame.

Yet through Christ, God made a way for us to be forgiven, for Christ came and shed His blood for us on the Cross. *[pause]*

He took our place, paying the penalty for our sin, so that we could be forgiven.

And all those who simply turn from their sin and trust in Christ's work on their behalf are completely and totally, once-for-all forgiven of all of their sins! *[pauseeee]*

Knowing and remembering this should radically transform the way that we relate to others!
[pause]

When we remember *how much* we were forgiven by God, how could we not extend forgiveness to that person that sinned against us? *[pause]*

When we remember God's lavish grace showered upon us in Christ, how could we not be kind, gracious, and tenderhearted to that other person? *[pause]*

Every sin against us should lead us to think of the Cross, where *our* sin was forgiven. *[pause]*

In the light of the Cross, our hearts should open in forgiveness, and love should shine forth.
[pauseeee]

This passage from God's Word teaches us that...

We are to put away anger quickly, and put on tenderhearted forgiveness.

As we think about all that we learned this morning, let's use this time to slow down and reflect upon our own hearts. *[pause]*

Do not think of the anger found out in the world, or the anger of others right now, but think of *your* anger. *[pauseeee]*

Some of you are angry right now with your spouse or other family member, and it feels so hard to control it. *[pause]*

Some of you have been angry about something that someone else said or did, and you can't stop dwelling upon it in your mind. *[pause]*

Others are mad about a co-worker that you can't seem to ever get along with, and who persistently gets on your nerves. *[pause]*

There may be some who are angry at the government, or certain politicians, or a political party.

Or maybe it's a constant anger at the way that the world is, and it just continually simmers under the surface. *[pauseeee]*

I'm not naive to the fact that there may be some in this room, or some listening to this sermon later on on the radio or on the internet, who are angry at God. *[pause]*

A hard situation or a hard life has led your anger to turn towards God, for you think that He's out to get you for some reason. *[pauseeeee]*

Some of you have begun in your anger with a righteous anger, but you've let it linger, and now it's morphed into sinful anger.

And there are others who have built up bitterness and resentment in your heart that has been there a while now. *[pauseeeee]*

What will you do with that anger? *[pause]*

Will you keep being angry? *[pause]*

Will you keep making excuses as to why you think it's justified?

Or will you follow God's commands here and put anger away? *[pauseee]*

If there's a conflict that needs to be resolved, then go to that person and graciously talk through it, and as far as it's possible on your end, seek reconciliation. *[pause]*

If you've tried to reconcile, but the person won't, then remember that you are to always take what you feel to the Lord and lay it at His feet, knowing that He knows and is just and good. *[pause]*

Rest in the fact that He knows, and put that anger, that bitterness, away. *[pauseeeee]*

Let's say that you have been sinfully angry, then confess that sin to God, and know that you have forgiveness in Christ.

But also, confess your sinful anger to anyone that you may have sinfully used your anger against—seek to make it right. *[pauseeeee]*

In all of this: be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving towards one another. *[pause]*

Reflect your Heavenly Father, and be stirred on by His grace and forgiveness of your sin. *[pause]*

Realize that you can only do this because of the Lord's forgiveness, and the Spirit's work in your life. *[pauseeee]*

So is there someone that you need to forgive? *[pause]*

Have you been holding a grudge, refusing to forgive someone? *[pause]*

Is there resentment or bitterness in your heart that you need to let go of? *[pause]*

Put that anger away—that doesn't reflect who you are to be in Christ.

And put on kindness and forgiveness, reflecting the kindness and forgiveness of our Lord, who has graciously forgiven you of your massive sin debt against Him.