

Anger and Lying:

2 Sins you should shed like a cheap suit

Have you ever opened your mouth only to hear lies or angry words coming out? These two sins are unfortunately more common even in the Church than we like to think. In what ways can lying and unrighteous anger impact not only individuals but also our churches?

The Sin of Lying

I'm reading Ephesians 4:25-27. Here's what the Bible has to say to us.

Therefore putting away lying. Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath nor give place to the devil.

Paul wasn't content to explain a principle and then leave it. He'd just shared the contrast between the old life and the new. Now, based on our new life in Jesus, he tells us the five sins we need to shed like a cheap suit.

Number one, lying. Verse 25 says,

therefore putting away lying. Let each one of you speak truth.

You know, a lie is a statement that is contrary to fact. It's spoken to deceive. If you ask me what time it is, and I tell you it's noon, and then I find out that my watch is wrong, I really didn't tell you a lie. But if I gave you the wrong time so that you would be late to a meeting and I would benefit from that mistake, then that's a lie.

The devil is a liar, and not only that, he is the Father of lies. It's his very nature. God is truth. The devil is a liar. If you don't remember anything else about this message, remember that.

Whenever we speak truth, the spirit of God goes to work, and whenever we lie, the devil gets his foot in the door and gains an advantage. Don't give the devil an edge. He doesn't need our help. He does an excellent job of destroying people's lives on his own.

In First Kings Chapter 21, King Ahab tries to purchase a vineyard from a man named Naboth, but Naboth refuses to sell. It had been in his family for a long time. It was part of his inheritance, and he wouldn't let go of it. The king became miserable, pouting and throwing a tantrum. He went to bed and refused to eat.

Finally, Jezebel, his honey of a wife, who couldn't stand it anymore, devised a diabolical plan. She sent letters in the king's name and summoned the city's elders to a judicial proceeding. They dragged Naboth into this kind of kangaroo court, where two scoundrels accused him of cursing God and the king.

Based upon the testimony of these two false witnesses, they took Naboth outside of the city and stoned him to death. Now, Ahab could take possession of Naboth's vineyard.

Both Ahab and Jezebel will die violent deaths as a result of this scheme. The bad guys ultimately lost. Be sure your sins will find you out. The consequences might not come immediately, but ultimately, they will come.

Naboth died because of the words of two professional liars. We've all heard that old saying, liar, liar, pants on fire. But listen, for the professional liar, more than just his pants will be on fire at the end of the age. Revelation 21:8 declares this:

All liars shall have their part in the lake of fire.

That's sobering. What's that verse saying to us? If you're a professional liar, you need to change your career.

Consequences of Lying

Mother asks her little boy, "Honey, what's a lie?"

Tommy answered. "Well, Mama. A lie is an abomination to the Lord, but a very present help in time of trouble."

At times, lying can seem like a very present help, but it will backfire on you, and you will live to regret it. No matter how fast we run after telling a lie, somehow, they always seem to catch up with us in the end.

Understand who Paul's audience was. He wasn't talking to some satanic cult or a pagan world. He's talking to people who attend church every Sunday and claim to know Jesus Christ as their personal savior.

The whole point of Paul's message is for us to stop and allow the Holy Spirit to examine our lives and ask, Oh God, is there any falsehood in me? Is there anything that's not ringing true in your ears when I open my mouth? Father, help me to be truthful.

According to Revelation 22:15, God prepared Hell for whoever loves and practices lying. A believer can fall into lying just like he can fall into any other sin. But if his life is a habitual flow of lies that proceed from a heart that seeks to deceive, that person has no biblical basis for believing that he is a Christian. I know that's strong, but that's what

God tells us in this scripture. A lie is a serious matter to God because it's the opposite of who he is. He is truthful. You can depend upon his word.

In Deuteronomy, chapter 32:4, the Bible says

He is a God of truth and without injustice. Righteous and upright is He.

Numbers 23:19 says

God is not a man, that He should lie.

God has never told a lie. God never will.

In Isaiah 65:16, He is simply called the God of truth.

So when a Christian, a good churchgoer, lies, he betrays God's character and nature. God's economy is based on truth, and his people, either as individual believers or as the corporate body, can't be faithful witnesses and servants in the work of God unless they live in truthfulness. The church can't function properly if its members lie to one another or fail to work together honestly. We can only effectively minister to each other and those outside these walls if we speak the truth in love.

As I said, Paul is not talking to pagans. He's talking to Christians. It's interesting that the first sin judged in the early church was lying. In Acts Chapter five, verses one through 11, God judged Ananias and his sweetheart wife, Sapphira, for lying, and they fell dead.

God was making a statement to the early church. The foundation of the gospel is built upon the truth of who God is, and we are to model that truth. That's who we are supposed to be.

Speaking Truth in the Body of Christ

Use your imagination with me for a moment. What would it be like if our brain started lying to us and sending out false signals to the different parts of our physical bodies? We'd be in a real mess. I can think of about a thousand scenarios of what could happen if my mind wasn't telling the rest of my members exactly what was true. Suppose my mind would start lying to my hands and feet. Wouldn't that be a terrible thing? Our physical bodies wouldn't function properly and safely.

Paul says, in verse 25:

"Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

We are the body of Christ. You may be a foot, a hand, or an eye. I don't know. But Jesus is the head, always telling us the truth when he communicates with us. But in the physical, what would happen if our minds became disconnected from our bodies?

The reason Paul gives for telling the truth and not sending false signals is that we belong to each other in Christ. God has put us together. He urged us to build up the body in love in verse 16 of this chapter and encouraged us to build the body in truth in verse 15.

I don't know if we will ever understand what Paul is saying and what the Bible teaches here. We are members of one another. We affect each other and can't build each other up apart from the truth. When we lie or intentionally mislead, we send out false signals that become stumbling blocks instead of building blocks. Lies do significant damage to the body instead of building it up.

That's why Paul tells us to shed the cheap suit of lying because it doesn't look good on us as the children of God. It's a terrible fashion statement. Cheap suits hang lousy. They don't look good.

Do you remember how your parents inspected you before you went out the door to make sure you looked okay? God takes a look at you when you lie and says you just don't look good. That's not a good fit for you.

It may be fashionable in our society to lie, but it doesn't suit you as a Christian. The prayer closet should be your changing closet. If you're not spending time in the prayer closet, you're not changing. You may go to church. You may pay your tithe and do a bunch of good stuff, but if you're not spending time in prayer, there is no way that you're changing.

The only way you can conform to the image of Christ is by spending quality time in the presence of God. That's why we have our daily devotions. Those quiet times alone with the Lord and those moments of meditation and waiting upon the Lord are critically important because God is investing Himself in us.

The prayer closet is where we put off the old man and put on the new. It's where Christ clothes us His righteousness and holiness. We are to become like Jesus, and Jesus is true to His word. Nothing about him is a lie.

Righteous Anger vs. Unrighteous Anger

Another sin that we need to shed is unrighteous anger. You see it there in verses 26 and 27.

"Be angry and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.

When you're angry without good cause, it's like putting out a welcome for the devil. It says, "Come on in. Make yourself at home." We don't want to welcome the enemy.

Not all anger, though, is wrong. Anger is an emotion that God himself experiences. The anger of the Lord is mentioned 18 times in the Old Testament. In Psalm 7:11, the Bible says this:

God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

The Hebrew word used here for angry literally means to foam at the mouth. Get this picture in your head. Envision God sitting on the throne in heaven. He is so angry at the world's wickedness, unrighteousness, and sins that He's and he's foaming at the mouth. That's how God feels about evil. He has not changed his attitude or feelings from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Jesus was without sin, but he wasn't without anger. When you think about the anger of the Lord in the New Testament, what do you think of first? He went into the temple where the peddlers were selling all kinds of things in the name of religion, like doves they could take into the temple and sacrifice.

This made Jesus angry. He made a whip, then he started flipping over the tables. Jesus went ballistic. He lost it, and if I'm a disciple, this is the Jesus I want to follow- the Jesus that will overturn the Roman Empire and set up his earthly kingdom.

The anger of the Lord has come into the house of the Lord. He tells them, You've turned my Father's house into a house of merchandise. Get out of here. Was this anger justified? Absolutely.

A man with a withered hand came for Jesus to heal him on the Sabbath. The hypocritical Pharisees were watching to see if Jesus would actually do it on such a holy day. They didn't doubt that he could do it. They knew He could heal. But their thing was, would he heal this man's hand on the Sabbath?

Jesus picked up on the vibes. Jesus knew the attitudes and the motives of their hearts. He was furious. And the disciples loved it when he did because they could relate to that. They could relate to his anger much more than turning the other cheek.

Jesus was always angered when someone maligned his Father, mistreated others, or when people in power misused their authority. But He never became selfishly angry at what others did to Him. Not once. That's the measure of righteous anger. He never struck back. He never lashed out when people were persecuting Him.

The way to be angry and not sin is to be angry at nothing but sin. You can get mad at sin. Jesus does. Psalm 97:10 says:

You who love the Lord hate evil.

Do you love the Lord today? Then what are you supposed to do? Hate evil. You can't hate people, even though sometimes it seems like there's a fine line there. You can hate the damage that sin does, but when you lash out at a sinner, you're not doing so with the heart of God. Jesus didn't come to condemn. He came to seek and save the lost.

Jesus loves sinners, and sinners love Jesus. In the Bible, they went to lunch all the time, and they hung out together.

The religious people were the ones who hated the sinners. Don't be religious. Be loving towards people, angry at sin.

Face it, many of the problems in our society today stem from a lack of holy and righteous indignation. If it's black, it's black. If it's white, it's white. We have to stop painting everything gray, but that appears to be the only color of paint that our society is selling.

Sin is anger that is self-defensive and self-serving. It's vindictive. In Matthew 5:21-22, Jesus says:

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' 22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

A quick temper is divisive and destructive; the Book of Proverbs says several things about it.

First of all, Proverbs 19:19 says:

A man of great wrath will suffer punishment;

For if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.

Most of that man's pain will be self-inflicted. Hatred is a hangman's noose that we put our own neck in. We hang ourselves. I love Westerns. I have never seen any cowboy sentenced to die at the gallows who runs up the steps and says, "I can't wait for this. This is the most exciting day of the last day of my life," and puts his own neck in the noose. Nobody does that. However, when we start hating people and attacking people, that is precisely what we are doing.

Defusing Anger and Seeking Reconciliation

Do you know that angry family members commit more than 60% of the homicides in this country? The number one killer in America is heart disease, and one of the significant causes of heart disease is anger. People who struggle with anger are five times more likely to suffer from heart disease than the average person.

Uncontrolled anger is an emotional, raging flood that destroys everything in its path. Proverbs 16:32 is a powerful verse.

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,

And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

If you're slow to anger in your personal life, God says you're better than any powerful person. And here's the clincher. "He who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." Oh, you want to be a mighty conqueror? Before you conquer a city, why don't you allow God by His Holy Spirit to conquer you?

The biggest giant we have to slay isn't a Goliath. It's ourselves. We create more problems in our lives than the devil ever could. The devil has no authority over you if you're a child of God. We are protected and shielded.

The greatest conquerors in the world can't compare to the man who rules his own spirit and brings himself under control through the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Everything good stems from being filled with the Holy Spirit. It gives us the strength to abstain from lying and control our unrighteous anger. A woman once said, "Yeah, I have an anger issue, but I explode, then it's all over." A man stood there and said, "You're just like my shotgun. I pull the trigger. There's a blast, and then I'm done. But the damage is done."

So you admit to getting mad and exploding. That's great but look at the damage that that brief moment of the explosion causes. The Bible says uncontrolled, unrighteous anger is a wide open door for the devil. Anger gives the devil an advantage.

Anger is a ticking time bomb that the Bible teaches us to defuse as early as possible. You feel yourself getting angry because something has happened to you. Someone has mistreated or abused you, and you sense you're about to explode. Step back. Shelter yourself for a few moments in the presence of God, and say, Lord Jesus, help me during this moment. Let me sense that peace that passes all understanding as I fix my mind on You.

Don't go to bed with anger in your heart. Make it right if you've done something out of anger to hurt or damage anybody. Do whatever you need to do. Two words will bring revival to a world when they come from a sincere and pure heart. I'm sorry.

Do you need to go somewhere or call someone today and say, I'm sorry?

Shed the sin of anger like a cheap suit because, like lying, it's not a good fashion statement in the kingdom of God. If you're lying or angry unjustifiably, you're not looking good. Sometimes the garb we wear doesn't match who we say we are. Our words must match our character because that's what matters to God.

Put on Christ. When you do that, you will dress for success in the spiritual realm, and your Heavenly Father will take a look at you as you go out into a desperate, angry world and be proud.

Stop being so angry all the time. Stop being so easily offended. I know one thing about the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It's like a Teflon coating. You can take a skillet, put an egg in it, heat it up, and slide it all around. The egg won't stick.

Do you let everything stick to you? You need a Teflon coating, and you can get it under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He gives you the ability to let some things slide. Let it slide. Give it to God. Don't defend yourself. Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord. He'll repay. He'll take care of it.