

Venom: Emotion: Exegesis of Ephesians 4:26a, Imperative of Concession

Problem solving of this type involves recognizing the reality of a situation: (1) that others are at fault, (2) that you have been truly wronged, and (3) that you have the option of either reacting to the situation through sin or responding through doctrine.

All of this can obviously be accomplished without sinning. However, in your period of evaluation, the sinful nature will tempt you to manage the situation through human viewpoint, human good, and evil. But this temptation must be resisted. You must avoid all impulses to retaliate and instead place the matter before the Supreme Court of Heaven.

In this manner grace orientation to life and doctrinal orientation to reality replace the three V's: vehemence, vengeance, and violence.

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v.:

- Vehemence* Intensely emotional; forcefully expressed; bitterly antagonistic. Impassioned.
- Vengeance* Punishment inflicted in retaliation for an injury or offense. Retribution.
- Violence* Exertion of physical force so as to injure or abuse. Intense, turbulent, furious and often destructive action or force. Outrage.

David avoided these things although he was in a state of righteous indignation in the face of the circumstances. But in Paul's context in Ephesians, he uses the grammar of the Koine Greek to indicate that the impulsive sin of anger has already occurred in the lives of the believers at Ephesus.

Ephesians 4:26 begins with the present middle imperative of the verb: *orgizo* - "To be angry."

In context it has to do with being the target of mistreatment; the recipient of hostility; or the victim of wrongdoing.

present: Aoristic; presents the action as a simple event without any relationship to its progress. It is the simple expression of an action which takes place in present time.

middle: Permissive; indicates that the subject causes the action of the verb to be produced upon himself.

imperative: Concession; expresses a request or makes a concession. As a result, the imperative of concession does not take on the usual force of a mandate but makes a concession to what is obvious and currently ongoing.

Paul concedes that impulsive anger is an ongoing part of the Ephesian believers' lives. With this concession in mind, the English translation must be constructed to bring out this idea: "Although you may have become angry."

The verb is followed by the concessive conjunction: *kai* - "nevertheless; in spite of that fact."

Then comes a straightforward negative mandate from the present active imperative of the verb: *hamartano* + the negative particle: *me* - "stop sinning."

present: Descriptive; indicates what is actually taking place; the impulsive sin of anger is occurring.

active: the impulsive sin of anger is producing the action of sinning and if continued will function as the trigger mechanism for chronic sins.

imperative: Negative mandate of prohibition.

Ephesians 4:26 CTL - Although you may have become angry [impulsive sin], in spite of that fact, stop sinning [these impulsive sins before they lead to chronic sins].

Impulsive sins not dealt with through rebound and biblical problem-solving devices will motivate chronic sins.

Anger plus bitterness works much like a fire—anger being the flames, bitterness the quiet smoldering embers hidden behind a thin facade of ashes. The fuel for the initial impulsive fire of anger is the unfair circumstance to which we react. The resultant billow, or sudden burst of flame, can be quickly quenched if the healing water of the Word is administered to the situation. If not, then the anger begins to smolder in the soul creating a bed of embers which we will identify as bitterness.

We picture impulsive anger as an overt burst of fire, a violent billowing flame that is very heated but generally short lived. But when impulsive sins are not volitionally doused, they smolder as chronic sins. The definition of “*smolder*” is important to our illustration:

Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “smoulder”

To exist or continue in a suppressed state.

Webster’s Ninth Collegiate, s.v. “smolder”

To exist in a state of suppressed activity; to show suppressed anger, hate, or jealousy.

The Ephesian believers are already involved in committing the impulsive sin of anger. Paul wants them to douse the flames with rebound and prevent their reignition by turning their grievances over to the Supreme Court of Heaven. This is what he means by the negative mandate, “*stop sinning.*” If they don’t quit reacting in anger, they will develop the chronic sin of bitterness which will smolder in their souls.

A fire’s embers are thinly veiled by a coating of ashes but just underneath simmer red-hot coals. Such is bitterness. It, like the embers can be suppressed and hidden but it can very easily burst into billowing flames with the slightest infusion of fuel. Providing that fuel is the unresolved situation between the believer and his adversary.

Anything associated with the ongoing feud serves as the source of fuel and anger reveals itself as a volatile, billowing outburst ignited from the hidden embers of smoldering bitterness. Anger + bitterness thus creates a major character flaw in the soul of the believer which constantly looks for fresh fuel to keep the fire going. Unresolved anger left to smolder into bitterness begins to accumulate several overt manifestations of what is otherwise hidden behind the facade. A few are mentioned in Ephesians 4:32 which we will note in detail later.

Ephesians 4:31 - Let all bitterness, wrath, and anger [these are mentioned in reverse order: the chronic sin manifest by explosive anger, both caused by mental attitude anger] along with clamor and slander be put away from you, along with malice.

What process and procedure are the believer to use in order to douse the flames of impulsive emotional sins such as anger before they begin to smolder into chronic sins of bitterness, clamor, and slander?

The problem-solving devices are mentioned next in the second sentence of Ephesians 4:26 which reads in the NAS:

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