

LIFE IS UNCERTAIN

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 (NIV)

Several years ago, a tragedy occurred on our front lawn. Two vibrant young people instantly went into eternity. A young couple was riding on a motorcycle, and as they went flying down the road, the driver lost control, left the roadway, and hit a telephone pole at the end of our driveway. As the evening progressed, it was very disturbing to think about the two bodies on the lawn and the two lives that ended.

Interestingly, it was a Sunday and we had attended a church service that evening. The text of the sermon was the verse above. Usually we think of that verse as it is in the King James Version: “Let not the sun go down on your wrath,” and we think of it as dealing with forgiveness, especially dealing with anger and issues that arise in marriage. It definitely is a godly principle to handle anger and other issues quickly, because letting them fester and grow only creates greater problems.

However, that night the pastor put a different twist on the verse. He used the words, “Do not let the sun go down on your sin.” Yes, anger and wrath are sins, but he expanded the concept. Do not let the sun go down on any sin issue. I know that “sin” is not a popular cultural concept in society today, but the truth of God is that when we violate God’s word, it is sin. As the pastor expanded the thought to include *all* sin, he mentioned the uncertainty of life. We say, “I will deal with it tomorrow.” We think, “I will accept God’s precious gift of salvation — next week in church.” Or we say, “I will come to God after I have ‘lived’ more of my life.” I’m sure those young people who died on our front lawn didn’t start their motorcycle ride thinking, “These are the last hours of my life!”

As we journey through Lent, it is a good time to reflect and ask, “Is there a sin issue in my life that I need to make right with the Lord or with a family member, or with a ‘brother or sister’ in the Lord?” Or perhaps there is the greatest issue of all ... Have you accepted the precious gift of salvation? Have you accepted the gift that Christ willingly died to provide for you? Have you brought your sin to Him who knew no sin and asked for His forgiveness?

Life is uncertain. Don’t let the sun go down on your sin.

Father, our lives are uncertain, but we know that you hold us in your righteous right hand. Help us live our lives in ways that honor and serve you.

MARSHA HAHN
PITMAN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

TRUST AND OBEY

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

PHILIPPIANS 2:8 (ESV)

We got a puppy this fall. As you must do with a puppy, we have been training her and working on teaching her to obey. She does a great job when she knows there is a reward involved. However, when she doesn't know what the reward is, or when she thinks what she's doing is a better option, that's another story.

Obedience isn't always an easy thing. At least, it's not always easy for me. Too often, I am that puppy who only wants to obey when I know what I'm going to get out of it. I am all too quick to disobey when things are uncertain or I can't see the end result of that obedience. If it looks as if obedience is going to cost me something or cause me pain, again, I am all too quick to disobey. I often think I know better.

In Philippians 2, Paul points us to Jesus, who shows us what perfect obedience looks like by "becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." This is the same mindset that we, as followers of Christ, are called to have: humble obedience.

Our obedience is the living, active proof of our trust in God. When we choose to disobey what God is asking us to do, we are saying that we trust ourselves more than we trust Him. Obedience caused Jesus pain. Obedience cost Jesus everything. In the end, Jesus knew obedience was worthwhile, because He knew God was trustworthy. How is God asking you to obey? How do you need to live out your trust in God today?

Father, we trust you and we want to trust you more. Help us today to live out of that trust, rather than live in fear of what obedience might cost us. Amen.

PASTOR SCOTT RAMBO
TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



The golden rule for understanding spiritually is not intellect, but obedience. If a man wants scientific knowledge, intellectual curiosity is his guide; but if he wants insight into what Jesus Christ teaches, he can only get it by obedience.

Oswald Chambers

TEAMWORK

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

EPHESIANS 4:16 (NIV)

Flocks of geese usually fly over in early fall heading for warmer weather. But I have heard a lot of honking and seen a lot of geese flying over this winter, too. We can learn many lessons about working together from the natural instincts God gave to these industrious birds.

Geese fly in a V formation, with one goose leading in the center and other geese trailing behind in close lines. As each goose flaps its wings, it provides additional lift and reduces air resistance for the ones behind. Using less energy this way they are able to fly much longer distances. If one goose drops out, it takes more work to fly.

Geese rotate leadership. The leader uses the most energy as it breaks the flow of air, making it easier for the followers. So as the leader tires, it drops out and moves to the back for much needed rest. Another goose takes the lead.

Why are they honking? They are encouraging those ahead. It has been discovered that if one goose becomes sick, injured, or shot, and drops out, two others drop out of formation and stay with the weakened goose until it recovers or dies.

Jesus came and suffered so that we may have eternal life. As He loves us, He wants us to love and care for others. He wants us to join together to support, to pray, to encourage, to cheer for, and to help those who are sick or alone. In this way, we do not leave all the work to one person. We all don't need to be a leader or in charge, but we need to help those who are. It takes teamwork to get things done. Just as the geese have teamwork, God wants us to use teamwork to get His work done. Then we will get so much more accomplished.

Dear Heavenly Father, I pray that you guide us to see those who need help, to offer a loving or encouraging word, to help lighten the load for those in leadership, and to help build others up in love. Amen.

TRUDY JENKINS
ZION COMMUNITY CHURCH

THE HABIT OF PRAYER – THE POWER OF PRAYER

Pray without ceasing.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17 (KJV)

From the earliest that I can recall of my childhood, we never went to bed without first brushing our teeth and then saying our prayers. Both became ingrained habits. While good personal hygiene is commendable, nothing compares to training in early childhood for praying.

I learned the mysterious comfort of prayer. One of my mother's favorite songs was "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," which contains the line, "Take it to the Lord in prayer." These words have often come to me through the years just when I most needed to be reminded. Prayer can be scary — sometimes answered before you even form a complete thought, let alone the words. At other times your patience is sorely tried while you are waiting for God's answer in His own timing. But He never fails.

Prayer is the most powerful force in our universe. I thank God daily for His many blessings and the comfort of the Holy Spirit and our Lord Jesus Christ in times of troubles and bereavements.

Sometimes when we're so troubled that our tired brains can't form our own words, the masterpiece of prayer as taught by Jesus is all the power we need. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He told them:

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.
Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13 KJV)

ELLIE DEANGELIS
UNITED METHODIST COMMUNITIES, PITMAN



Don't forget to pray today because God did not forget
to wake you up this morning.

Oswald Chambers
My Utmost for His Highest Journal