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Righteous or Dangerous? An Investigation of Ὀργίζεσθε in Ephesians 4:26

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Abstract: *This article investigates the imperative phrase found in Eph 4:26, ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε ("Be angry and do not sin"). Whereas traditional interpretations of this verse either explain away the force of Paul's imperative phrase or understand the anger spoken of here as something that might be helpful at first but must soon be put away (i.e., before the sun sets), the present author argues that Paul's command is best understood as a true imperative that encourages believers to take action against anything that may disrupt the unity of the Spirit within the believing community (Eph 4:3). The thesis is supported by four arguments: grammatical (Is this phrase a true imperatival phrase?); contextual (What is the function of this phrase within its immediate context?); semantic (What should the sun not be allowed to set on?); and Metaleptic (How does this phrase's function in Psalm 4 illuminate its use in Ephesians 4?).*

Key Words: *ecclesiology, Ephesians, Greek grammar, intertextuality, metalepsis, Pauline studies, righteous indignation*

"When you two get married, you will soon encounter several occasions to become angry. It is very important, however, that you do not hold on to that anger, and never go to sleep without being reconciled to one another. That is why the apostle Paul said that when we become angry, we must not sin. We must never let the sun go down on our anger. If you do, you will give the devil an opportunity to destroy your marriage." With these and many other words of wisdom, our pastor counseled my soon-to-be-wife and me as we prepared to embark on that frightfully wonderful journey called marriage. There is no denying that his counsel was indeed filled with wisdom and insight. After all, harboring anger and allowing a new day to dawn without having made peace is certainly no recipe for a healthy marriage. But is this actually what Paul intended when he wrote to the Ephesian Christians: Ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε·ὁ ἥλιος μὴ

ἐπιδυέτω ἐπὶ [τῷ] παροργισμῷ ὑμῶν, μηδὲ δίδοτε τόπον τῷ διαβόλῳ?[1] The purpose of this essay is to investigate whether this traditional understanding is indeed the appropriate interpretation of Eph 4:26–27. Is the anger spoken of here to be seen as righteous or as potentially dangerous?

Traditionally, this passage has been translated and interpreted in a way that renders the imperatival phrase in 4:26a as either conditional, "*If* you are angry do not sin," "In your anger do not sin" (NIV);[2] or permissive/concessive, "Be angry, if you must, but do not sin," "Be angry and yet do not sin" (MSG, NASB, ISV).[3] These renderings have given rise to the interpretation witnessed in my former pastor's pre-marital counsel. "If you get angry," or "when you get angry," or "sometimes you may indeed need to get angry," "make sure your anger does not lead to sin by being prolonged beyond its necessity." As I mentioned above, this is certainly good advice, but the premise of this essay is that this is not how this passage should be interpreted.

My thesis is as follows: Eph 4:26–27 should not be understood as a warning against the potential dangers of prolonged anger; rather, it should be interpreted as a call to respond in righteous anger/indignation against anything that may disrupt the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace to which the believing community has been called. These peace-destroying actions and attitudes (whether found in the individual himself or in other members of the community) must not be allowed to linger but should be dealt with swiftly and quickly, lest they give room for the devil to infiltrate the community and bring an end to the divinely desired unity.

I will establish the cogency of my thesis via four supporting arguments. First, I will piggyback on Daniel Wallace's noteworthy essay to demonstrate that rendering the first clause of 4:26 as a simple command

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[1] Barbara Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 5th rev. ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2014), Eph 4:26–27. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's own work.

[2] Commentators who take this interpretation include Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 313–14; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 292; William J. Larkin, *Ephesians*, A Handbook on the Greek Text (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 98; Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 449.

[3] See also S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 387; W. Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, New Testament Commentary (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 217.

is indeed the ideal grammatical option.[4] Second, I will argue that the surrounding context of Ephesians 4 and 5 leads us to understand the imperatives in 4:26–27 as actions that have as their intended goal the maintenance of the community's unity and peace. Next, I will demonstrate that τῷ παροργισμῷ in 4:26b has erroneously been interpreted as synonymous with anger. This misconstrued rendering has added to the confusion regarding this passage's significance. Lastly, I will demonstrate that the context of Psalm 4 (especially in the LXX) serves to clarify that the phrase Ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε is not a statement regarding the sinful potential of anger; rather, it is a call to use righteous anger as a tool to fight against sin and to maintain the community's holy unity.

Grammatical Argument

In his landmark essay, Daniel Wallace successfully demonstrates that the traditional way of rendering Ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε as a conditional or concessive/permissive imperative phrase is faulty. He argues that despite the popularity of this interpretation, grammatically, it is difficult to maintain.[5] There are several reasons for this difficulty. First, conditional imperative phrases are "always or almost always found in the construction *imperative* + καί + *future indicative*. The idea is, 'If X, then Y will happen.'"[6] Thus, the clause in Eph 4:26 does not match the typical construction of conditional imperatival phrases since the construction found here is *imperative* + καί + *imperative*.

It is possible, though, for a conditional imperative phrase to be constructed as witnessed in Eph 4:26: *imperative* + καί + *imperative*. It is important to note, however, that there are no indisputable examples of conditional imperatival phrases constructed in this fashion.[7] Furthermore, Wallace argues that all the possible conditional imperatives constructed this way "require the second imperative to function semantically as a future indicative (i.e., stating the consequence/fulfillment of the implied

[4] Daniel B. Wallace, "Ὀργίζεσθε in Ephesians 4:26: Command or Condition?" *CTR* 3 (1989): 335–72.

[5] Since the initial publication of the article, Wallace and others have further elaborated on his original arguments. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 491–93; Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 211–12; Andreas J. Köstenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 214.

[6] Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, 211. Examples of this construction include Matt 7:7; 8:8; Jas 4:7.

[7] Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, 212.

condition)."[8] If this were the case, Eph 4:26 would read, "If you are angry, then you will not sin." Hardly anyone would consent to such an interpretation. In addition, conditional imperative phrases likewise require the imperatival force of the verb to remain.[9] In other words, ascribing to a conditional or concessive interpretation of the passage does not do away with the fact that Paul is still commanding his readers to be angry.[10] In light of this, Wallace concludes that the imperatives found in Eph 4:26 should be interpreted as forming a simple command and prohibition phrase: "Be angry and do not sin." Following his grammatical investigation, Wallace explains the meaning of the verse as such:

> One should not give a place to the devil by doing nothing about the sin in the midst of the believing community. Entirely opposite of the "introspective conscience" view, this text seems to be a shorthand expression for church discipline, suggesting that there is biblical warrant for δικαία ὀργή (as the Greeks put it)—righteous indignation.[11]

Much more can be said and has been said in regard to the grammatical details of conditional imperatival constructions.[12] My intention, however, is not to rehash everything that Wallace and others have already delineated; rather, I would like to provide supplemental arguments to support their conclusions, and hopefully, to provide firmer ground for future translators, commentators, and preachers to translate, interpret and proclaim Eph 4:26–27 in a way that honors Paul's original intention.

Contextual Argument

Having determined in the previous section that the traditional acceptance of a conditional or concessive interpretation is grammatically improbable, the hermeneutical conclusions stemming from them likewise

[8] Wallace, "Ὀργίζεσθε," 371. A prime example of this is found in John 1:46, "Ἔρχου καὶ ἴδε." The idea here is, "If you come, you will see."

[9] Wallace, "Ὀργίζεσθε," 371.

[10] This conclusion is rather surprising in light of the fact that some renowned Greek scholars attempt to argue against the imperatival force of Ὀργίζεσθε. See Baugh, *Ephesians*, 392, who despite acknowledging that Wallace is correct in his argumentation, concludes that Paul is not giving a command to be angry, he is simply acknowledging that certain kinds of anger "are warranted and permissible." See also Thielman, *Ephesians*, 313, who rejects Wallace's argument in favor of the conditional interpretation and argues that the passage "is concerned with avoiding sin in the situations where anger is present."

[11] Wallace, *Beyond the Basics*, 492 (emphasis original).

[12] See note 5 above.

become difficult to maintain. If we are correct in interpreting the phrase Ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε as a simple command, how then should we understand it? What exactly did Paul expect to accomplish by writing these imperatives for his audience?

Before being able to comprehend what Paul expected to accomplish with the use of the imperatives in Eph 4:26a, it is important to understand what he was attempting to accomplish with the entire subunit containing 4:26–27, namely 4:25–5:2. This small subunit of verses serves as a continuation of the exhortations begun in 4:17–4:24. There, Paul exhorts his readers to no longer walk according to their former life, as the Gentiles still do (4:17–19), but to walk according to the new creation life that is created after the likeness of God (4:24). Regarding our present section, Baugh argues that "Paul continues his instruction on how citizens of the new creation are to walk together in love, word, and deed."[13] Thus, it is prudent to understand 4:25–5:2 as a further explication of how the members of this new community are to walk in a way worthy of this new creation life, rather than understanding it as a distinct section that merely seeks to comment on the pros and cons of certain virtues and vices.

Having discussed the nature and unity of the new humanity that Christ established through his Spirit—one people, under one Lord, in one Spirit and one God and Father (4:1–6)—and having also reflected on the means and gifts that Christ has provided to maintain this Spirit-established unity, as well as the dangers that stand against it (4:7–16), Paul begins in 4:17 to discuss how each member of the community is responsible for the continual edification of the entire body. In 4:25 then, Paul continues what he began in 4:17, and thus exhorts his readers to walk (i.e., live) in a manner that promotes the growth and protects the peace and unity of the community. It must be stressed that the overarching goal of this section is not to provide a commentary on the virtues and vices themselves, but to demonstrate how they play a part in either building up or breaking down the peaceful unity of the community. Thus, each exhortation must be seen in light of this overarching goal.

Several aspects of this passage bear witness to the fact that the goal of the imperatives found in 4:25–5:2 and beyond is indeed to promote how the members of the community can play a part in maintaining spiritual unity. A first piece of evidence is the fact that this section begins with a summarizing statement, Διὸ ἀποθέμενοι τὸ ψεῦδος (4:25a). Although some commentators see this statement as a simple reference to doing away with the actual practice of lying and dishonesty,[14] to understand it as

[13] Baugh, *Ephesians*, 380.

[14] Benjamin L. Merkle, *Ephesians*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 147; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 313.

a summarizing statement that is parallel to 4:22 makes better sense of the context and thus serves to establish a link between the two sections.[15] In this view, the phrase "putting away falsehood" stands synonymously with the statement found in 4:22, "Put off your old self." This old self is further described as belonging to the former existence of the saints, which was chiefly characterized by a separation from the life of God (4:17–19). In light of this connection, the command to "speak truth to one another" (4:25b) is likewise not only a call to be honest in one's words, but also a call to speak and live in a manner that promotes the growth of the whole body,[16] and encourages its members to not turn back to their old ways. It is thus synonymous with living out the "true righteousness and holiness" in the likeness of God that Paul speaks of in 4:24. The fact that the command to speak truth is grounded on the statement "we are members of one another" further indicates that the overarching focus of this section is indeed on maintaining the spiritual unity described earlier in the chapter.

Another reason for understanding the present section as focused on promoting the growth and protecting the peace and unity of the community is the fact that λαλεῖτε … πλησίον αὐτοῦ (4:25b) is a direct quote from Zech 8:16. Understanding the original context of the Zechariah passage will greatly illuminate the function that it plays in our current passage.[17]

Zechariah 8:16 is part of a subunit spanning from 8:1–17. This unit addresses the reconstruction of the temple and seeks to incentivize the people to work hard at rebuilding the temple by pointing them to the unimaginable restoration and prosperity that will come when God visits his people when they complete the temple. Klein argues that Zechariah 8 serves as a call to repent and to live righteous lives in light of the future restoration that will come about by the coming presence of God.[18] Boda likewise reasons that in 8:16–17 Zechariah provides moral imperatives that are necessary for the community to avoid God's wrath, experience His holy presence, and maintain the peace of the restored community

[15] See also Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 4–6* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 511; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 390.

[16] This is precisely how the presence of truthfulness in 4:15 functions.

[17] Although some commentators are skeptical about allowing the original context of the quote to illuminate our understanding of the current passage, I believe the following discussion will display the fruitfulness of such investigation.

[18] G. L. Klein, *Zechariah*, NAC (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 232. For more discussion on the connections between the building of the temple in Zechariah and the building of the new temple in Ephesians, see Baugh, *Ephesians*, 390.

who will dwell in God's holy city; namely, the "city of truth" (Zech 8:3).[19]

In light of the previous discoveries about the context of Zechariah 8, we can begin to see how Paul may have intended to utilize Zech 8:16 in a similar fashion to Zechariah himself; that is, to urge God's restored community to live in a way that maintains the Spirit-established peace and unity.[20] In this light, speaking truth to one another in a way that protects the unity and the devotion of the body is thus seen as the counterpart to the empty deceitful words that undermine God's righteous requirement over the community (Eph 5:6). Thus, this conclusion provides further reason for understanding all the imperatives in this present section, including 4:26a, as serving this ultimate goal.

As noted above, Eph 4:26–27 is not meant to provide a treatise on the possible dangers of anger; rather, it is a simple command to be angry. What it means to be angry will be further discussed below, but for now we must recognize that whatever being angry entails, it needs to be understood as something that Paul saw as playing a significant role in maintaining the unity and the peace of the community. Consequently, in giving the command to be angry, Paul does not initially place "anger" in a misleading optimistic light only to later unveil its true character by warning his readers of its dangers. Rather, he presents it as something positive, something that may be used to keep the community from returning to their old ways and to thus maintain the unity of the Spirit.

Semantic Argument

So far in our study we have concluded that the imperatival phrase found in Eph 4:26a should be understood as a simple command and that regardless of what it means to be angry, the anger that Paul encourages here ought to be seen as something that is used to promote growth and to protect the peace and unity of the community. It must be acknowledged, however, that up to this point in the argument one could still maintain that although Paul prescribes anger under certain circumstances, the focus of the rest of 4:26–27 is on the fact that anger, even righteous anger, can lead to sin if allowed to linger for too long. After all, is that not what

[19] M. L. Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 505–6.

[20] Much can be said about how Paul's use of Zech 8:16 sheds great light into his understanding of God's new covenant people and the relationship between Israel and the Church. For further information regarding this topic, see Baugh, *Ephesians*, 390.

Paul means by saying that we should not let the sun set on our anger?[21] In other words, Paul might very well be commanding his audience to respond in righteous anger under certain occasions, but this anger should quickly be done away with lest its prolonged duration provide a timely opportunity for the devil to infiltrate the community and breed destruction and turmoil in its midst.

Once again, there is no denying that such conclusions are certainly profitable. Prolonged anger does provide a potent opportunity for destructive attitudes and actions (e.g., bitterness, wrath, clamor, slander, and all sorts of malice) to fester within a community, and these must surely be put away (4:31). But is this meaning actually what Paul is attempting to communicate when he says, ὁ ἥλιος μὴ ἐπιδυέτω ἐπὶ τῷ παροργισμῷ ὑμῶν (4:26b)? Having commanded his audience to respond in righteous anger as a means to protect the peace and unity of the community, would Paul then in the same breath demand them to put that very same peace-protecting-anger away? Would he actually command anger as a tool in the battle against sin and before drawing another breath inform the community that this very same weapon can itself become the cause of sin if wielded for too long? This is certainly plausible; but is it probable?

This section will demonstrate that just as the traditional interpretation of the imperatival construction found in 4:26a is faulty, the traditional rendering of τῷ παροργισμῷ in 4:26b as synonymous with "anger" is likewise improbable. In its discussion on παροργισμός, BDAG acknowledges that the term may at times refer to a "a state of being intensely provoked" (i.e., anger), but it gives preference to understanding it as "provoking to anger" or "an action that calls forth anger in someone."[22] Despite the

[21] The phrase "Do not let the sun set upon …" is an idiom referring to accomplishing something promptly before the day ends (i.e., before the sun sets). Its clearest example is Deut 24:15 where those in charge of hired workers are commanded to pay their workers daily and to not let the sun set on their wages. Philo likewise used the phrase when paraphrasing Deut 21:22–23. The original refers to not letting the body of man who has been put to death spend the night on a tree. Philo paraphrases it as "Do not let the sun go down upon the crucified but let them be buried before sundown." See, Philo, *Philo*, trans. F. H. Colson, G. H. Whitaker, and J. W. Earp, LCL 7 (London; Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann; Harvard University Press, 1929–1962), 571. In both cases the object of the preposition "upon" is what should be addressed promptly. Thus, in our passage what should be handled before long is τῷ παροργισμῷ.

[22] Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago:

information found in BDAG and other lexicons, a quick investigation of the major English translations demonstrates that, without a single discrepancy, all render παροργισμός as a synonym of ὀργή ("anger") rather than exploring its other potential meanings.[23] Many commentators reach the same ominous conclusion.[24] Such translations imply that what must be dealt with before the setting of the sun is the very same anger that was commanded just a few words prior. In other words, anger may very well be permissible, or even required, but it must not be allowed to endure very long.

There is, however, a path of divergence from the majority; a path that, though minimally trodden, has been trodden nonetheless. One example of such bold trailblazing efforts is none other than Daniel Wallace himself. As was discussed above, Wallace argues that what must be dealt with before the setting of the sun is not anger, but rather, the things within the community which cause the righteous anger to come about, namely, sin.[25]

Another brave example of non-conformity in the area of Bible translation is found in the Complete Jewish Bible, translated by David Stern. Stern renders this passage as such: "Be angry, but don't sin—don't let the sun go down before you have dealt with the cause of your anger; otherwise, you leave room for the Adversary."[26] It is difficult to say whether or

University of Chicago Press, 2000), 780. See also the entries found in Henry George Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); J. Lust, Erik Eynikel, and K. Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003).

[23] NIV, NLT, ESV, NASB, KJV, NKJV, HCSB, ISV, RSV. The same is true of the Vulgate and its English translation as found in the Douay-Rheims.

[24] See Baugh, *Ephesians*, 392; Barth, *Ephesians*, 515; Merkle, *Ephesians*, 149; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 314. Thielman acknowledges that in its LXX usage παροργισμός "most often refers to the provocation of anger." Yet, rather than investigating further how such rendering of παροργισμός would function in the present context, Thielman defaults to the traditional interpretation. He concludes, "Here the word probably serves as a synonym for ὀργή (*orgē*), perhaps with a hint, supplied by the prefix παρά (*para*), that as time passes, unattended anger is likely to increase." Thielman bases his conclusion on the word's root rather than on how it functions in the present context and in the other contexts where it is found. I believe this serves as a good example of the "root fallacy" that D. A. Carson warns against. See D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 28.

[25] Wallace, "Ὀργίζεσθε," 365. Wallace's conclusion seems to take the information found in the lexicons seriously.

[26] David H. Stern, *Complete Jewish Bible: An English Version of the Tanakh (Old Testament) and B'rit Hadashah (New Testament)*, 1st ed. (Jewish New Testament Publications, 1998).

not Stern understands "cause of your anger" in a similar fashion to what Wallace and the present author argue for, but his example does serve to demonstrate that we are not alone in rendering παροργισμός as something other than "anger."

Part of the confusion in translating παροργισμός is due to the fact that it is a *hapax legomena* in the NT and is virtually non-existent in ancient Greek literature.[27] This has led some commentators, such as Thielman, to rely on the etymology of the word to discern its meaning, rather than on the way it functions within its various contexts.[28] Fortunately, παροργισμός is not as infrequent in the LXX. As a noun, παροργισμός occurs seven times in the LXX. In all its occurrences, with only one exception, παροργισμός is used in a similar fashion to its verbal relative in the NT.[29]

[27] After performing a search for παροργισμός in the ancient Greek database http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/, I only found one positive match besides Eph 4:26. It occurs in Epistle 22 of Saint Basil, Bishop Caesarea, titled 'Περὶ τελειότητος βίου μοναχῶν' (Concerning the perfection of the life of monks, or life of solitaries). Interestingly, the use of παροργισμός in this letter is found in a context describing how to deal with sin within the monastic community. St. Basil emphasizes that sin must be dealt with so severely that unrepentant brothers are to be excluded from the community. In explaining his reasoning for treating sinful behavior as such, St. Basil quotes Eph 4:26 and says, "The sun must not set upon the brother's παροργισμός." He continues his reasoning by explaining, "So that night may not separate brothers from one another, and so that the accusation may not stand immovable on the day of judgment. The brother must not delay the time of his restoration, because there is no certainty about tomorrow, because many, in their many plans, have not reached tomorrow" (My own translation). See, Saint Basil and Roy DeFerrari J, *The Letters*, vol. 1, LCL 190 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 138.

[28] See note 24. Interestingly, although παροργισμός is rather scarce, the NT does contain two occurrences of its verbal form παροργίζω (Rom 10:19; Eph 6:4). In both of its usages, it refers to when one party performs deeds that stir up anger in another. It must be noted, however, that using a word's verbal form to argue for the meaning it carries as a noun may likewise qualify as an example of the root fallacy. Thus, although these verbal forms found in the NT may illuminate our understanding of παροργισμός more than its mere etymology, it should not be definitive.

[29] The seven occurrences are: 1 Kgs 15:50; 2 Kgs 19:3; 23:26; Jer 21:5; 2 Esd 19:19, 26; Pss. Solomon 8:9. The exception is found in Jer 21:5 where it is used synonymously with God's great anger and wrath. Yet even here the context indicates that this great παροργισμός of the Lord is something that will greatly provoke the people as they are hauled off into exile (Deut 32:21; Ezek 32:9; Rom 10:19).

One instructive example is found in 1 Kgs 15:30 where παροργισμός is used to refer to the sinful actions (particularly idolatrous actions) of Jeroboam, as well as the rest of Israel, which caused God's anger to be stirred up against them. Here, the author helpfully placed παροργισμός in apposition to ἁμαρτία, thus strengthening our argument. Two other illuminating examples are found in 2 Esd 19:18 and 26.[30] In the former, παροργισμός is used to refer to the idolatrous acts Israel committed when they worshiped the golden calf. In the latter, it is used to describe the disobedient and rebellious lifestyle of the Israelites, who upon entering the Promised Land, cast the Lord's law behind their back and killed his prophets. In both instances, παροργισμός is used to translate the Hebrew term נָאַצָה, typically rendered as "blasphemy." Thus, in the majority of its usages in the LXX, παροργισμός is not used synonymously with anger. Rather, it is used as a reference to actions that stir up another's anger, typically idolatrous, sinful actions that stir up God's judicial anger.[31]

This conclusion is all the more elucidated when we consider the feminine form of παροργισμός: παρόργισμα. In its feminine form, the word only occurs three times in the LXX. On each occasion παρόργισμα is used to describe idolatrous, sinful actions that stir up God's righteous anger.[32] The most illuminating of these examples is found in 1 Kgs 16:33. Having described how Ahab did greater evil than Jeroboam by serving and worshiping Baal, erecting an altar for Baal and a house of idols, as well as a sacred grove (Asherah), the author (translator) then used παρόργισμα to summarize Ahab's idolatrous and wicked lifestyle.

This rendering of παρόργισμα and παροργισμός is strengthened by the fact that its verbal form παροργίζω (occurring 57x in LXX) is predominantly used to describe actions similar to those witnessed to by its nominal relatives. In Deut 4:25 and 31:29 it is used synonymously with making carved images and doing evil deeds. In Jdg 2:12, 17 it is used as a reference to going after other gods. In 1 Kgs 16:2, 13, 26 it is used to describe going after vain idols. In 2 Kgs 17:7, 11 it is used in reference to idolatrous actions such as burning incense, burning children, and practicing divination. In Jer 7:18; 8:19; 11:17; and 25:6 it is used to describe going after idols, making carved images, burning incense, and abandoning the Lord. In Ezek 16:26 and 20:27 it is used to describe turning towards the nations

[30] In English translations this is cataloged as Neh 9:18 and 9:26, respectively.

[31] In light of this information, including the discussion found in the Lexicons, particularly BDAG, it is surprising that most English translations have continued rendering παροργισμός as a synonym for anger.

[32] 1 Kgs 16:33; 2 Kgs 20:22; 2 Chr 35:19.

rather than to God.[33]

In light of this investigation, we can conclude that anyone familiar with the LXX (particularly the literature of Deuteronomy, Judges, 1–2 Kings, 2 Esdras (Nehemiah), Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah), would surely know that παροργισμός and its lexical relatives are used to refer to unpleasant actions that stir up anger. More specifically, the terms refer to evil idolatrous deeds that stir up God's righteous anger. It seems then, that we can confidently conclude that παροργισμός in Eph 4:26b should likewise be rendered as such.[34] Thus, the audience is not told to keep the sun from setting on their anger, but to not let the sun set on the things that stir up anger (presumably God's righteous anger). In other words, what should not linger, but rather should be dealt with immediately, is not anger but sinful, idolatrous deeds that if left unchecked will give room for the devil to destroy the unity of the body and will ultimately bring about God's righteous wrath (Eph 5:6).[35] This conclusion makes sense in light of the appeal found in 4:17–24 to put off the old idolatrous self. The word idolatry does not occur explicitly in Eph 4:17–24; but Eph 5:3–5 hints at the fact that the former life described in the first passage was indeed a life of idolatry:

> But sexual immorality, and all impurity or lust must not even be named among you just as is proper for saints; as well as shamefulness, foolish talk, or inappropriate joking which is not proper. But rather, (let) gratitude (be named among you). For you know this well, that all sexually immoral, and impure, and lustful—which are idolaters—have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Metaleptic Argument

Thus far we have seen that the imperatival phrase in 4:26a should be interpreted as a simple command that has as its goal the promotion of growth and the protection of unity and peace in the community. We have also seen that the παροργισμός that must not be allowed to linger is not a reference to the same anger commanded in 4:26a, but a reference to sinful, idolatrous deeds that if left unchecked can destroy the community. Thus, such actions should be met with righteous, judicial anger from the

[33] Some other examples include Isa 1:4; Pss 77:40, 58; 1 Kgs 20:22; 22:54; Jdt 11:11.

[34] This is based not so much on the fact that Paul's audience would have been familiar with the LXX, but on the fact that Paul was not merely familiar with the LXX, but deeply influenced by it.

[35] It is important to emphasize that this is a call to be vigilant for sin, not only in the life of others within the community, but also in one's own life.

members of the community. That the command to anger is indeed a call to action against sin in the community is further confirmed when we consider that 4:26a is a direct quote from the LXX translation of Ps 4:4 (4:5 in LXX). This section will demonstrate that a comprehension of the context of Psalm 4 (particularly its LXX rendering) will greatly illuminate our understanding of its literary/rhetorical function in Paul's letter to the Ephesians; namely, as a call to action against sin.

That Eph 4:26a lacks a standard introductory formula has led many to downplay the significance of the Psalm's original context in Paul's writing.[36] We must add, however, that the lack of an introductory formula by no means necessitates the lack of the transumption of material from the original context of the citation into the new context. Such material may very well provide a literary backdrop for the new context regardless of whether or not a formal introductory formula is present. This transumption of material is especially true in the case of exact quotations, as is the case in Eph 4:26a. Additionally, if we only allow the original context of citations that live up to this standard to play any significant role in illuminating the new context, we will be left with only allowing what is cited in Eph 4:8 and 5:14 to serve as any sort of literary backdrop for the epistle—since these are the only two citations that are introduced by the formula διὸ λέγει.[37] Although some doubt that the context of Psalm 4 is of any significance to understanding Eph 4:26a, it is the burden of this section to demonstrate that comprehending the literary/rhetorical function of the imperative phrase in its original context will illuminate our understanding of how Paul intended to use it in his context.

There is great divergence among commentators regarding what exactly the historical context of Psalm 4 was, and thus the specific literary/rhetorical function of the phrase "be angry and do not sin."[38] Yet, there is still agreement on important matters. Regardless of who exactly the imperatival phrase was intended for, and what specific need/occurrence

[36] Sadly, this assumption is shared by Wallace, who thus far has provided major support for my argument. Wallace, "Ὀργίζεσθε," 359. See also Merkle, *Ephesians,* 148; H. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1959), 69.

[37] A serious problem with using this standard to explain away the existence of literary significance from a citation's original context is that several OT passages play a significant role in creating a literary backdrop for Ephesians. Such passages are never explicitly cited, yet nevertheless provide an important background. One prime example of this is the importance of Psalm 110 and Psalm 8 as regards the exaltation of Christ in chapter 1 of Ephesians.

[38] The MT reads רִגְזוּ וְאַל־תֶּחֱטָאוּ (Ps 4:5) which would be best rendered, "Tremble and do not sin."

made it necessary for the psalmist to issue this warning, we can be sure of one thing: namely, that it is indeed a warning. Regardless of who was being addressed, whether it was Absalom's helpers or other shameless individuals who were making false accusations about the psalmist (presumably David),[39] or whether it was some of the psalmist's own friends who were discouraged because of difficult times,[40] or whether the psalmist was addressing himself because of his great anxiety about the uncertainty of his relationship with the Lord,[41] or even if it was some within the community who had turned to idols for the blessing of rain upon their crops,[42] one thing still remains: in using this phrase, the psalmist is calling his audience to repentance and to turn in trust to the Lord.[43] He is calling them to turn away from loving vanity (רִיק; ματαιότης; cf. Eph 4:17), to leave behind their search for falsehood (כָּזָב; ψεῦδος; cf. Eph 4:25), and to live so as to offer unto the Lord a righteous sacrifice (זֶבַח; θυσία; cf. Eph 5:2).

The connection between Psalm 4 and Ephesians is further elucidated when we consider that in the LXX rendering, rather than being asked, "How long shall my honor be turned to shame?" as is the case in the MT, the addressees are asked, "How long will you be hard hearted (βαρυκάρδιοι)?" The reference to βαρυκάρδιοι clearly sets up the drama of Psalm 4 in a narrative of sin, rebellion, and idolatry. The noun βαρυκάρδιοι only occurs here in the Greek Bible, but the combination of the verb βαρύνω (to harden) with the noun καρδία (heart) occurs seven times in the LXX. Each time, minus one, it is a clear reference to an individual whose heart has become hardened due to their rebellion against God.[44] The prime example of this is Pharaoh who was unwilling to listen to the word of the Lord, and so five of the seven occurrences refer to him.

The presence of the phrases ἀγαπᾶτε ματαιότητα and ζητεῖτε ψεῦδος

[39] Leupold, *Psalm*, 68; A. I. Ezra, *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the First Book of Psalms, Chapters 1–41*, trans. H. Norman Strickman (Brooklyn: Yashar Books, 2006), 42; L. A. Schokel and C. Carniti, *Salmos I (Salmos 1–72): Traduccion, Introduciones y Comentario* (Navarra: Verbo Divinio, 2002), 176.

[40] A. Weiser, *The Psalm: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 119.

[41] E. Charry, *Psalms 1–50: Sigh and Songs of Israel,* Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2015), 17.

[42] M. Dahood, *Psalms*, AB 16 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 23.

[43] If you are convinced by Charry's argument, the audience here would be the psalmist himself.

[44] The seven occurrences are as follows: Exod 8:11; 8:28; 9:7; 9:24; 1 Sam 6:6; Ezek 27:5; Sir 3:27. Ezekiel 27:5 provides the exception. There the reference is to ships who are weighed down in the heart of the sea.

(4:3) likewise indicates that the Psalm (as rendered in the LXX) is staged against a backdrop of idolatry and sin. These terms are frequently used in the LXX to refer to idolatrous deeds and other sinful actions that stir up God's righteous anger. An informative example is found in Jer 8:19. There we see that the people of Israel have provoked (παροργίζω) the Lord with their carved images and with their idols/vanities (ματαιότης). Thus, we see that the call to "be angry and not sin" in Psalm 4 is not a simple acknowledgment of the appropriateness of anger under certain circumstances, but rather, a call to do away with apathy towards sin and rebellion. It is a call to repent, and thus, to turn to the Lord. There is good reason, therefore, to believe that this clarion call against sin and rebellion found in Psalm 4 is likewise what Paul intended to accomplish in his epistle.

CONCLUSION

This essay has argued that Ephesians 4:26–27 should be interpreted as a call to respond in righteous anger/indignation against anything that may disrupt the holy unity of the Spirit-indwelt community. Such peace-destroying actions and attitudes (whether found in the individual himself, or in other members of the community) must not be allowed to linger, but should be dealt with swiftly and quickly, lest they give room for the devil to infiltrate the community and bring an end to the divinely desired unity.

This conclusion has been promoted via four supporting arguments: grammatical (The phrase in 4:26a is a true imperative phrase); contextual (The imperatives in 4:26–27 commend actions that have as their intended goal the maintenance of the community's unity and peace); semantic (παροργισμός in 4:27 should be interpreted as referring to sinful actions and attitudes that jeopardize the community's unity and bring about God's righteous anger); metaleptic (The literary/rhetorical function of the imperatival phrase in 4:26a mimics the function it served in the original context of Psalm 4 of the LXX).

The command to be angry in Eph 4:26a is indeed a command to anger, but it is not a justification for sinful, self-centered anger. Rather, it is a call to swift action, in godly justice and love, against anything that may threaten the growth, unity, and peace of the community as well as anything that may grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30). It is a call to act in a very similar fashion to the way our own Lord acted in the presence of injustice and sin. Mark records that when confronted with the sinful arrogance of the Pharisees, Jesus "looked around at them with anger, grieving at their hardness of heart" (Mark 3:5). It is my contention that in writing to the Ephesians, as well as to us, Paul hoped that we would all likewise be stirred up and grieve at the presence of hard-heartedness and sin within ourselves and within the Christian community.