

INTRODUCTION

1. I want to invite you to turn in your Bibles this morning to Ephesians chapter 4.
2. I want to pick up where we left off last week in verse 31 which says, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.”
3. For three weeks now we have been in a study called “The Disappearance of Sin.”
4. And in this study we have been addressing what Jerry Bridges calls “respectable sins.”
5. In his book bearing the same title, he says “respectable sins” are “not obvious sins of our culture but the subtle sins of believers” (8) “those sins that we tolerate in our lives” like “religious pride...critical attitudes...unkind speech...impatience and anger, even our anxiety” (21).
6. And if we leave these things unchecked in our lives they will spread like cancer “throughout our entire inner being and contaminate every area of our lives” (23).
7. So we have been addressing some sins that are obvious and some that are not that obvious to us because we have tolerated them for so long in our lives.
8. Charles Spurgeon asks this penetrating question, “Do you give

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Ephesians 4:31
Dr. Steven R. Hereford, Pastor-Teacher
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fair names to foul sins? Call them what you will, they will smell no sweeter.”

9. So how are we to respond to these sins that we tolerate?
10. Spurgeon gives this advice: “When a sin does easily beset you, you must master your whole force and cry unto heaven for strength to overcome it.”
11. In the words of Romans 6:12-13 you are “not [to] let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”
12. A.W. Tozer says, “A new Decalogue has been adopted by the neo-Christians of our day, the first word of which reads ‘Thou shalt not disagree,’; and a new set of Beatitudes too, which begins ‘Blessed are they that tolerate everything, for they shall not be made accountable for anything.’”
13. Well we do not want to tolerate these sins nor be unaccountable either.
14. So let’s see what the Bible says further about these things.
15. We have already looked at “lying” (v.25), “anger” (vv.26-27), and “stealing” (v.28), and last time “unwholesome words” (vv.29-30) and “bitterness” (v.31).

- I. Lying (v.25)**
- II. Anger (vv.26-27, 31)**
- III. Stealing (v.28)**
- IV. Unwholesome Words (vv.29-30)**
 - A. We Are Not to Speak Unwholesome Words

“Unwholesome” (sapos) refers to “rank, foul, putrid, rotten, worthless, disgusting” words (Rienecker).
 - B. We Are to Speak Words that Edify

Our speech should build up by being helpful, constructive, encouraging, instructive, and uplifting” (MacArthur, 188).
 - C. We Are to Speak Appropriate Words

Paul continues by telling them to speak “according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

 - 1. We should choose our words carefully
 - 2. Our words should be gracious
 - D. We Are to Put Aside Unwholesome Words So that We Do Not Grieve the Holy Spirit (v.30)

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

V. Bitterness (v.31)

Paul says, “Let all bitterness...be put away from you.

A. Bitterness is the Temper Which Cherishes Resentful Feelings

It is a feeling of animosity or spite. Somebody does something we do not like, we harbor ill will against him.

Charles Hodge says, “The word bitterness, in its figurative sense, means what is corroding, like grief, or anything which acts on the mind as poison does on the body, or on the minds of others as venom does on their bodies. The venom of the serpent lies harmless in his fang; but all evil feelings are poison to the subject of them, as well as being venom to their object. The command, therefore, to lay aside all bitterness is a command to lay aside everything which corrodes our own minds or wounds the feelings of others” (Ephesians, The Crossway classic commentaries [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1994]. Eph 4:32).

B. When One is Bitter He Will Not Reconcile with Others

Instead...

1. He will be resentful

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2. He will have harsh feelings (MacDonald)
3. He will have a bitter frame of mind (Vincent)
4. He will have an unwillingness to forgive (MacDonald)

Jay Adams says, He “isn’t ready for forgiveness because he is holding onto these sins, refusing to confess and forsake them” (From *Forgiven to Forgiving* [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989]. 43).

This is why you have to “Let every form of irritability, every inward resentful disposition against others, and hardness of spirit be put away from everyone of you” (KJV Bible Commentary [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1994]. 2420).

C. Forgiveness is the Only Positive Element that Can Overcome Bitterness

Paul says in verse 32, “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

R.C.H. Lenski says, “The moment a man wrongs me I must forgive him. Then my soul is free. If I hold the wrong against him I sin against God and against him and jeopardize my forgiveness with God. Whether the

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Ephesians 4:31
Dr. Steven R. Hereford, Pastor-Teacher
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man repents, makes amends, asks my pardon or not, makes no difference. I have instantly forgiven him. He must face God with the wrong he has done; but that is his affair and God's and not mine save that in the case he is a brother I should help him according to Matt. 18:15, etc. But whether this succeeds or not and before this even begins I must forgive him" (The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians [Columbus, O.: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937]. 588).

Now we come to the next two sins listed in verse 31...

VI. Wrath And Anger (v.31)

Robert Jones in his book *Uprooting Anger*, wrote, "Anger is a universal problem, prevalent in every culture, experienced by every generation. No one is isolated from its presence or immune from its poison. It permeates each person and spoils our most intimate relationships. Anger is a given part of our fallen human fabric...Sadly this is true even in our Christian homes and churches."

Here Paul mentions "wrath" and "anger."

"Between wrath and anger there is little difference, except that the former denotes the power, and the latter the act" (John Calvin, Calvin's Commentaries: Ephesians, electronic ed., Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries [Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998]. Eph 4:31).

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Ephesians 4:31
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A. Wrath

This would be the act.

The Stoics said that “wrath” (thumos) was “as an initial explosion of hot temper.” This would be “rage—the passion of the moment” (MacArthur) which would be displayed by “temper tantrums” (MacDonald).

William Barclay said “The Greeks defined thumos as the kind of anger which is like the flame which comes from straw; it quickly blazes up and just as quickly subsides” (The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1976]. 159).

This word is translated in the LXX as “fury” (Gen.27:44), “hot anger” (Ex.11:8), and “enrages” (Prov.6:34).

In the NT it is also translated as “rage” (Lk.4:28) and “outbursts of anger” (Gal.5:20).

We could call this *vented anger*.

Proverbs 29:11 says, “A fool always loses his temper, But a wise man holds it back.”

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Ephesians 4:31
Dr. Steven R. Hereford, Pastor-Teacher
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Vented anger manifests itself in yelling/screaming, slamming things around, cursing, telling someone off, attacking verbally / name calling, hitting.

The next word...

B. Anger (v .31)

“Suggests a more settled or abiding condition of mind, frequently with a view to taking revenge.

Orge is less sudden in its rise than thumos, but more lasting in its nature” (Jerome H. Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge : The Most Complete Listing of Cross References Available Anywhere- Every Verse, Every Theme, Every Important Word* [Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992; Published in electronic form, 1996]. 1384).

It is a “more internal, deep hostility” (MacArthur) or “gnawing hostility” (Boles).

Some have even called this *the slow burn* because it manifests itself by clamming up / moodiness, being frustrated, being irritated, being disgusted, glaring, huffing / snorting.

This is “the word used in 4:26 of legitimate anger, namely, righteous indignation. But here, Vincent says: ‘What is commanded in verse 26 is here forbidden,

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Ephesians 4:31
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because viewed simply on the side of human passion” (Kenneth S. Wuest, Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, c1984]. Eph 4:31).

1. We need to understand that anger is a spiritual problem, not primarily a physical problem

That’s why James says in James 1:19-20 says, “This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and **slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.**”

Anger in all its deception is...

2. Anger is often the result of wanting something that you do not possess or not wanting something you do possess and therefore it dominates the cravings and desires of the heart

so...

3. Sinful anger displeases God
 - a) Psalm 37:8 says, “Cease from anger and forsake wrath; Do not fret; **it leads only to evildoing.**”
 - b) Proverbs 14:29 says, “He who is slow to anger has great understanding, But he who is

quick-tempered exalts folly.”

VII. Clamor (v.31)

Some translations have “brawling.” This is the Greek word *krauge*, which is “shouting out in anger.”

A. It is the Outcry of Strife Out of Control

This is “violent outburst of the person who has completely lost his temper and begins to yell at others” (Hendriksen).

William MacDonald says this includes “angry bickering [and] shouting down opponents” (Believer’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians).

B. This Kind of Behavior is Characteristic of a Mob or Assembly that Covers up Lack of Sober Arguments with its Loudness.

- a) We see this in Luke 23:23 where the crowds “were insistent, with loud voices asking that He [Jesus] be crucified. And their voices began to prevail.”

Or where the Ephesians, after hearing a silversmith named Demetrius, says they were in danger of their trade coming to disrepute because of the message Paul was preaching.

- b) Acts 19:28 says, “When they heard this and were filled with rage [thumos], they began crying out, saying, ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!’”
- c) Proverbs 29:9 says, “When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man, The foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.”

C. Slander (v.31)

“Slander” (blasphemia), literally, “speaking against.”

“In reference to God it is ‘blasphemy’; in reference to man it is reviling and cursing, including the use of ominous and obscene words” (Kenneth L. Boles, Galatians & Ephesians, The College Press NIV commentary [Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1993]. Eph 4:31).

Slander takes on many forms.

Jerry Bridges says, “Closely related to the sin of gossip is the sin of slander. Slander is making a false statement or misrepresentation about another person that defames or damages the person’s reputation.”

He asks, “Do Christians slander?” What’s the answer? Yes!

He continues, “We slander when we ascribe the wrong

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Ephesians 4:31
Dr. Steven R. Hereford, Pastor-Teacher
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motives to people, even though we can't see their hearts or know their particular circumstances. We slander when we say another believer is 'not committed' when he or she does not practice the same spiritual disciplines we do or engage in the same Christian activities we engage in. We slander when we misrepresent another person's position on a subject without first determining what that person's position is. We slander when we blow out of proportion another person's sin and make that person appear to be more sinful than he or she really is" (Respectable Sins, 160-61).

A. The Command Against Slander Appears Early in the Bible

Leviticus 19:16 says, "You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the Lord."

B. Slander is a Serious Sin

God says in Psalm 101:5, "Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy."

Proverbs 6 tells us that this is one of the things God hates. Proverbs 6:19 says, "And one who spreads strife among brothers."

C. If You Are One who Spreads Slander You Are A Fool

Proverbs 10:18 says, "He who spreads slander is a

fool.”

D. If You Control Slander Contention will Stop

Proverbs 26:20 says, “For lack of wood the fire goes out, And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.”

Charles Spurgeon said, “Do not be ready to receive such reports; there is as much wickedness in believing a lie as in telling it, if we are always ready to believe it.

There would be no slanderers if there were no receivers and believers of slander; for when there is no demand for an article, there are no producers of it; and if we will not believe evil reports, the tale-bearer will be discouraged, and leave off his evil trade”

(http://www.spurgeon.us/mind_and_heart/quotes/s4.htm#slander).

IX. Malice (v.31)

“Malice” (kakia) is a general term for evil, the root of all vices, especially those just mentioned.

A. This Attitude or Action Intends to Harm One’s Neighbor”

John Calvin says, “ The correction of all the rest will be greatly aided by the removal of malice” (Calvin's

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Ephesians 4:31
Dr. Steven R. Hereford, Pastor-Teacher
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Commentaries: Ephesians, electronic ed., Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries [Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998]. Eph 4:31).

B. 1 Peter 2:1 Says this is to Be Put Away from You

“Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.”

“These particular sins involve conflict between person and person—believer and unbeliever and, worse still, between believer and believer. These are the sins that break fellowship and destroy relationships, that weaken the church and mar its testimony before the world. When an unbeliever sees Christians acting just like the rest of society, the church is blemished in his eyes and he is confirmed still further in resisting the claims of the gospel” (John MacArthur, Ephesians [Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986]. 190).

R.C.H. Lenski says of “wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice” that they “form a climax. First, ‘bitterness,’ embitterment, is felt in the heart. The next step is ‘exasperation,’ which is still in the heart although hard to be restrained. The third step is ‘anger’ which blazes forth. The fourth, ‘yelling,’ is a violent outburst of words. The fifth is a cursing in words of ‘blasphemy’ against the opponent” (The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians [Columbus, O.: Lutheran Book

Concern, 1937]. 586).

CONCLUSION

1. As long as these sins persist in our lives, there will be no disappearance of sin.
2. You must “mortify the deeds of your body” as Colossians 3:5 says.
3. You must “reckon yourself dead to sin” as Romans 6:11 says.
4. Lying, anger, stealing, unwholesome words, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice must be put away from you once and for all.
5. As well as other “respectable sins” like, “jealousy, envy, and greed.”
6. In the words of Colossians 3:8-10 says, “But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.”
7. Do you find any of these sins brooding in your heart?

The Disappearance of Sin (Pt.3)
Ephesians 4:31
Dr. Steven R. Hereford, Pastor-Teacher
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8. If so, take a few moments to pray with me and ask God the Holy Spirit to remove it from you.
9. Agree with Him that it is sin and that you desire to turn from it.
10. If you're here today and have never received the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you can do so right now.
11. The Bible says in John 1:12-13, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."
12. Let's pray.