

August 12, 2001

Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking

**Ephesians 4:31** *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Husbands and wives have problems and the divorce rate is skyrocketing because of sin. ***Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice.***

**Illustration:** Bettie and I met a young lady, 16, on visitation yesterday. She had a sister and two brothers. Their parents were just divorced this past summer, and the father moved to Michigan with his new live in girlfriend. The kids have tried to make contact with him, but he has ignored all their efforts.

I can't imagine the ***wrath, anger and evil speaking*** that has gone on in that family.

People advance on the job or get favorable treatment by supervisors and employers by anything other than by honest effort and hard work. Advancements come by climbing over other people.

**Illustration:** At the first jewelry store where Jessica worked, one of the female employees got to be manager of the store by sleeping with the district manager.

Sin is rampant. Those trying to do right according to the word of God seem to get trampled in the dust of the wicked.

**1 John 5:18** *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. 19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. 20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. 21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

Notice John did not say that the Devil owns the whole world. What he did say is that the whole world is naturally captive to sin, or lost. Men by nature in their minds and actions are given over to wickedness and evil. They are willingly given over to the power of the wicked one. And we can fully expect fallen man to act accordingly.

Satan may be called the god of this world, but not because the Lord God turned the world over to him, but because man has rejected the Lord God and is serving Satan.

John tells us that those in Christ have a new nature. John is not at all suggesting that we withdraw from the world. But he does tell us that those in Christ have overcome the world, though the world at this time is given over to sin. Then John closes this particular exhortation with, ***Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.***

Paul tells us that we have been delivered from the power of sin and translated into a new kingdom, the kingdom of His Dear Son. (Col. 1:13.)

In **Ephesians 4:17-32**, Paul warns us against ***giving place to the devil***, v. 27. In other words, though we have been delivered from the power of sin and to the kingdom of His dear Son, there is an ever present danger of giving the wicked one room to work in our lives.

**V. 30, And grieve not the holy Spirit...** Let us say that one of your children gets cross ways with the Lord, and goes to the devil. You would grieve greatly over his actions. The grieving would probably be so bad that you could not function as you could if he remained right with the Lord. This is the picture here of the Holy Spirit in

Ephesians 4:17-32.

There are several things listed here that cause the Spirit to *grieve* that is, make Him unable to function in our lives as He would otherwise. In fact, these things not only grieve the Holy Spirit, but they give room for the devil to work in our lives. We give the devil *place* to work in our lives, and thus we hinder the Spirit's good work in our lives.

There are several things listed in vv. 17-32 that give the enemy *place* to work, but we will only look at v. 31 *bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, malice.*

John (1 John 5:19 above) tells us that we live in a world given over to wickedness.

Genesis 6:5, *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

The Flood did not change fallen man's attitude toward God nor toward sin. God said after the flood that *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* (Gen. 8:21.) Our natural state today is still the same. The difference is that man's life-span does not give him as long to develop sin as he did before the flood. In addition, God's grace now works through Christ to free Abraham's seed from the power of sin.

Wicked people can be expected to do wicked things, and wicked people are all around. Many times, those wicked things are done to us, maybe because of our profession of Christ or just because we get in someone's way as they rush to the top, and they take advantage of us.

When someone does not act toward us as they should or as we think they should, our natural response is to become *bitter* and *angry* over what is done to us. Or we might become bitter over a wrong someone does to a loved one. Bitterness gives place to the devil; bitterness gives him room to work in our lives. And he works to destroy us, to destroy our family, and to destroy our joy in the Lord.

Let us look at this verse a little this morning. What does it mean to be bitter?

A feeling of ill will.

*Bitterness, wrath, and anger* mean violent inward resentments and displeasures against others. *Clamour* means loud threatenings by which bitterness, wrath and anger make themselves known. *Evil speaking* signifies the angry words we speak as a result of the anger in our hearts. These **angry words** are common among family members.

*Malice* signifies the inward anger that prompts us to plan mischief to others, even if we do not get a chance to carry it out.

Note here that we can smile and act nice toward others while having *malice* in our hearts. Malice can even motivate good actions when we see that the good actions can lead to getting even with someone.

**What can cause these things** bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour and evil speaking?

We do not go far with any fellow-traveler on the journey of life before we find there is many opportunities for bitterness, wrath, anger and evil speaking.

He has a different temperament from ours. He may be confident, optimistic, cheerful, or he may be short-tempered, or he may be gloomy, sad and depressed. And all the time, we are just the opposite. **Isn't it aggravating when we want to be gloomy that other person is upbeat and cheerful? It makes me want to choke that person.**

He has tastes and habits that we find peculiar or unusual, which differ much from ours.

He has his own plans and purposes of life, and his own way and time of doing things.

He may be naturally irritable, or he may have been so raised with a different manner of speech or different manner of conduct than ours.

**Husbands and wives** we can easily find enough imperfections in each other that it does not take much magnification to become very **irritated** at each other. If we choose to magnify those minor things, life can be so full of irritations that we would be miserable with each other.

And friendships can be the same way if we allow it.

If we want to make it through life reasonably smoothly, we must **learn to bear and forbear**. We must learn to overlook things in that person we say that we love. His peculiarities of saying and doing things that may be important to him, but which may be of little importance to us. Those things that will not make a whit of difference 5 years from now must be overlooked.

**Like children, we must permit each one to build his playhouse in his own way, and not quarrel with him because he does not think our way the best.**

None of us like to be around people that cannot bear to have anyone differ with them.

A spirit of fault-finding with our spouse and with our friends and neighbours will undo all the good we have done in the past. It can make life anything but a blessing.

The contrast to v. 31 is v. 32:

*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ s sake hath forgiven you.*

**Kind** implies humble and courteous behaviour.

**Tenderhearted** implies merciful being able to identify with the distresses and sufferings of others, and being moved to help them in their distress.

**Forgiving one another** implies overlooking common differences, particularly among the followers of Christ. This does not mean overlooking sin that God requires we deal with.

*Even as God for Christ s sake hath forgiven you...*

Note upon what grounds God forgives:

**Proverbs 28:13**, *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*

God forgives and restores fellowship based upon confession and turning from sin.

We are forbidden to hold grudges in our hearts and to seek vengeance, just as we are forbidden to restore close ties unless confession and forsaking takes place.

In upper New York is Niagara Falls. It is a mighty falls, and quite impressive. But one Niagara is enough for the nation, for it does no good for the farmers here in Indiana. It does no good for the water supply of the cities here in the Mid West. What is needed is many fountains and gently-flowing rivers and streams.

Our lives should be like the small fountains and gently-flowing streams. It is not the great good deeds, the Niagara Falls, that this world needs. It is the day by day small and gentle deeds, the daily Christian temper, the meek forbearance, the daily forgiveness in the husband, the wife, the father, the mother, the brother, the sister, the friend and the neighbor that is needed to water the land so it will be useful.

1 Corinthians 13:4, **Love is long suffering**. It bears long with those idiosyncracies that seem to rub us the wrong

way as you would rub a cat the wrong way.

And many times it is only by the grace of God that that urge to express our agervation is withheld.

TO HERE, August 12, 2001

How do we overcome bitterness:

Ephesians 4:2, With longsuffering, etc. Bearing patiently with the foibles, faults, and infirmities of others. See Barnes "1Co 13:4".

**Charity suffereth long.** Paul now proceeds to illustrate the nature of love, or to show how it is exemplified. His illustrations are all drawn from its effect in regulating our conduct towards others, or our intercourse with them. The reason why he made use of this illustration, rather: than its nature as evinced towards God, was, probably, because it was especially necessary for them to understand in what way it should be manifested towards each other. There were contentions and strifes among them; there were of course suspicions, and jealousies, and heart-burnings; there would be unkind judging, the imputation of improper motives, and selfishness; there were envy, and pride, and boasting, all of which were inconsistent with love; and Paul therefore evidently designed to correct these evils, and to produce a different state of things by showing them what would be produced by the exercise of love. The word here used denotes longanimity, slowness to anger or passion; long-suffering, patient endurance, forbearance It is opposed to haste; to passionate expressions and thoughts, and to irritability. It denotes the State of mind which can BEAR LONG when oppressed, provoked, calumniated, and when one seeks to injure us. Comp. #2:4 9:22 2Co 6:6 Ga 5:22 Eph 4:2 Col 3:12 #1Ti 1:16 2Ti 3:10 4:2 1Pe 3:20 2Pe 3:15.

The virtue here required is that which is to be manifested in our manner of receiving the provocations which we meet with from our brethren. No virtue, perhaps, is more frequently demanded in our intercourse with others.

### **Hebrews 12:15, 16.**

Let me give a quick outline up to v. 15:

- 1) v. 1, there are many watching us, both from heaven and on earth.
- 2) v. 2, our eyes must remain on Christ. He alone can be our example. He kept his eyes on what lay before him, and he endured more than any person ever endured. The result was his everlasting glory.
- 3) vv. 3, 4, if we fail to keep our eyes on him and meditate on him, we will grow weary and faint, ***in our minds***. The outside actions may remain proper in the eyes of others, but our ***minds*** will be weary and faint.

When we think we are getting run over by sinners, meditate on what sinners did to Christ. Yet he kept on going because of what he knew was before him.

- 4) v. 4, *striving against sin* that is, standing against sin, v. 1. We have not yet stood against sin to the death, which is what Christ did.

In other words, the bad things that happen to us that could lead to bitterness may be simply the operation of sin and sinners against us, as it was for Christ.

- 5) vv. 5-13, on the other hand, the bad things that happen could be God dealing with us about sin in our lives. Whatever bad thing that comes upon us, we must first look to see if it is the Lord dealing with sin.

6) v. 14, our goal with *all men* must be *peace, and holiness*.

V. 15, *looking diligently*. Take great care, or watch out.  
*any root of bitterness*. This root remain hidden until it sprouts.