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HOW TO OVERCOME BITTERNESS AND ANGER

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS
NUMBER 49
EPHESIANS 4:31-32

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

When believers are filled with the Holy Spirit, they produce divine good. When believers sin, they grieve the Holy Spirit and they produce human good. When believers are controlled by the old sin nature they quench the freedom of the power of the Holy Spirit operating in their lives. So we are commanded not to quench and not to grieve the Holy Spirit.

EPHESIANS 4:31 "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:" Here we are given several illustrations of things we can do to grieve the Holy Spirit. The emphasis in these illustrations is on mental attitude sins and sins of the tongue. Overt sins are not mentioned here. Quite often Christians are taught that the main area of sinning is in the overt area and great emphasis is placed on the Ten Commandments, to the exclusion of mental attitude sins and sins of the tongue.

Here in this passage we have an emphasis on those sins we commit in our relationship with others, and in reality, these are the worst sins of all. Remember this principle--you cannot hurt others without first grieving the Holy Spirit.

"Let" is our first word in this verse and it goes with the words "be put away" which we find farther down in the sentence. These four words go together and form the main verb of the sentence. They all come from one Greek word. Now in translating this one Greek word, why do they use the word "Let?" The reason is this. They had great difficulty translating the aorist, passive, imperative. Now they didn't have any trouble translating the active imperative for it means if you want someone to do anything, you just say, "Do it" and that is quite clear. That's the active imperative. You say, "Go" or "Stop" or "Stand still" and that's the active imperative and quite easily understood. But the passive voice is much more difficult to translate and to be understood. We do not think of the passive imperative in English, so these translators had to try to find some way of bringing this meaning over into our language.

Almost always when you find the word "Let" in the New Testament, you will find hovering nearby a verb. This is what we find here. "Let us put away" is from the Greek verb "airo" and it means to lift up, to lift up something and carry it away. In this aorist, passive, imperative form, it refers to a point of time when you are guilty of some mental attitude sin or some sin of the tongue. Now how do you lift up or carry away such a sin? Well, to be quite frank, you can't do it. So it is passive voice and that means it has to be done for you and you receive the lifting up and the carrying away of that sin. It is in the imperative mood, showing that it is not optional, but is an absolute

necessity. So this is a command for confession, and the moment you confess God lifts up and carries away the sin and you receive forgiveness from God. That is why the Scripture says, "I will take it from you as far as the East is from the West, and I will remember it against you no more." Now that's the exact meaning of the word "airo" here. You confess and God lifts up and carries away the sin. So this imperative mood is a command for us to confess our sins.

Specific Sins Mentioned In This Passage

1st--Bitterness.

This word is from "pikria" and it means mental attitude hatred toward another person. Bitterness is the basis for chain sinning according to Hebrews 12:15. "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;" A sin of this kind usually has a cluster of other sins that accompany it. In other words, you never have bitterness without having many other mental attitude sins along with it. Bitterness always brings another group of sins along, and that is why bitterness is mentioned first here in this verse.

Now you may be bitter because of envy or jealousy or a desire to get even with someone else. Many times people are bitter because of a guilt feeling. Bitterness is a cluster-type sin. Bitterness never stands alone but carries other mental attitude sins with it. Bitterness is just the starting point, and opens the door and lets other sins enter too.

The next sin is WRATH and this is an emotional type sin. The word is from "thumos" and this word has as its root meaning "boiling" and it refers to emotional type anger. The Greeks distinguished between emotional anger and mental anger. Wrath here means a turbulence in the emotions. It pictures a mind that is just like a boiling pot. The Greek word "parorgismos" always means mental attitude anger but it does not occur in this passage. "Orge", the root of this word is in the mental attitude, but this word "thumos" is an emotional word and please remember, emotion changes quite often. They go up and down, up and down. We get the word thermometer from this word.

PLEASE WRITE THIS DOWN AND REMEMBER IT. THE QUINTESSENCE OF HUMAN STUPIDITY IS TO LET ANOTHER PERSON OFFEND YOU AND DRIVE YOU TO THE "THUMOS" type of wrath. There is just no excuse for this ever happening in your life. No believer should ever allow "wrath" to fill his mind. Decisions made under the boiling attitude of wrath are almost always the wrong decisions. This word means that the boiling starts in the emotions and it boils over in all directions.

The third word is translated "ANGER."

Now this is from the Greek word "orge" and this is mental type anger. When it is a bona fide type anger, it is indignation. (This is the type of anger we studied earlier in this chapter when it says, "Be angry and sin not.") Orge means antagonism toward people in the mental attitude of the soul. It can bring misery to the one possessing it and to those who are its recipients. So here we have a distinction between an emotional anger and a mental attitude anger. Emotional wrath comes and boils over and then goes almost as quickly as it comes. But anger, this "orge" type anger, can last for days or weeks or months or even years. So don't worry too much about the "thumos" type wrath, but

remember, it is the "orge" crowd you really have to watch. This kind of anger festers in the mind and heart. The "orge" crowd will lay awake nights trying to figure out how they can hurt you. These are the coward who make anonymous phone calls and write anonymous letters. This is the type of mental attitude sins that produce revenge tactics. For these two sins, wrath and anger, we have two basic principles.

- 1st--Two wrongs never make a right. Even though you think your anger is justified, always remember, two wrongs never make a right.
2nd--You cannot build your happiness upon the unhappiness of another.

The fourth type of sin we have here is CLAMOUR.

The Greek word is "krauge" and it means vociferous, loud, red-faced anger. The loud vociferous "blow your cork" type of anger. This is the "thumos" emotional type anger expressed by the tongue, usually in quite loud voice.

The fourth type of sin here is EVIL SPEAKING.

This means to malign, to slander, to criticize with sharp criticism. This comes from the mental attitude. These are the subtle type. This verse shows that all sins are interrelated and it is very rare to find a sin in isolation. So the only way to face these things is to confess the sin immediately and get back in fellowship with God. So all these emotional sins and mental attitude sins are clustered around the sin of bitterness.

If you have allowed these sins to go so far as to lead you to revenge activity, then you need to go back to the source and start tearing away these mental attitude and emotional sins. Be sure to check your mental attitude closely, for all sins stem from mental attitude. They are the most subtle sins of all, and they are the worst sins, for they are the spring from which the big river begins to flow. You see, you have to go back to the origin. Now this verse is not designed to give an exhaustive list of sins, for if it were so designed, it would cover several pages. But this verse is designed to show you that sins come in clusters, in bunches. This verse says, "Look--here is the spring from which the big river of sin begins to flow in your life."

The words "with all malice" is a term referring to the bad character which is the result of this kind of sinning. The word is "kakia" and this is a bad character filled with bitterness, anger, wrath and clamour and evil speaking.

EPHESIANS 4:32 "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." This is the ninth result given in this chapter of the edification complex structure in the life. Please notice that verse 32 says, "Be ye kind" and verse 1 of chapter five says, "Be ye followers of God." In the Greek there was no chapter division here. The "be ye" in both verses is incorrectly translated. In both verses it is a present, active, imperative of "ginomai" and it means to become something that you have not been before. So it should be translated "keep on becoming." This is a command to the believer to keep on becoming something that he has never been before. The command is to become oriented to grace and to function by grace.

The word "kind" is from "Chrestos" and it means to be gracious. The noun is in the plural and it means to have all the graces that emerge from every step in the edification complex. So this is a command for us to have the entire edification complex in the soul.

There are many synonyms for the edification complex; and here are some of them:

1. Light "Thy word giveth light."
EPHESIANS 5:8-9 "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)"
2. Christ at home in your heart.
EPHESIANS 3:17 "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,"
3. Christ is formed in you.
GALATIANS 4:19 "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,"
4. The filling of God.
EPHESIANS 3:19 "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."
5. The new man.
EPHESIANS 4:24 "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."
6. Obedience to the truth.
1 PETER 1:22 "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:"
7. Imitators of God.
EPHESIANS 5:1 "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children"

The word "kind" here means gracious. You can never have the edification complex unless you are oriented to grace.

This next word "tenderhearted" will throw you unless you know exactly what it means. It comes from "eusplagnos" and it means compassion of the soul based on the edification complex. This is something that is absolutely impossible for the unbeliever to achieve. This can be achieved only in the life of a child of God. The believer takes Bible truth into his soul and from it, he erects a great inner structure of faith and trust and truth and as a result, he finally has spiritual coordination. As a result, doing the will of God just comes to be second nature with him. "Tenderhearted" is a state of spiritual maturity and you just naturally do right things and live relaxed and you do it automatically. The result of all this is "forgiving one another." The word is "charizomai" and it means to graciously forgive. Now you know there are two ways to forgive--

First, you can forgive and forget and rub it out and never bring it up again. Second, you can forgive, provided you crawl to me and make exactly the right sounds and have the right attitude and then I'll consider forgiving you and I won't mention it to you over twenty or thirty times and remind you how gracious I have been to forgive you. Now that's the way some people forgive, but it is not the forgiveness spoken about here.

The forgiveness mentioned here is the forgiveness based on grace. Now there is no doubt about it, this person has really wronged you. But you never remind them about it. You forgive and forget and bury it and it is over. And the illustration is--"As God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Now that's perfect forgiveness based on God's perfect character. He forgave on the basis of grace and we must forgive on the same basis.