

# The Ultimate Angel Hitler, Christ and the antichrist Matthew 24:24

As the end of the world approaches, so does earth's darkest hour.

Hell will open and the pit will vomit out its demon hordes to run wildly throughout humanity. Other beasts from the abyss will wreak death and destruction globally. And Satan himself invades the earth and conquers it all at last.

At the helm, the visible leader of the world will be the long promised man of sin, the lawless one, the beast, the Coming World Leader - commonly known as the Antichrist - who has 33 titles in the Old Testament and 13 in the New Testament. But behind him, the real power will be the god of this world, the dragon, old Lucifer, the lying serpent of Eden.

The Bible clearly teaches (1 Timothy 4:1-3) that we can expect this invasion from the pit in the last days. During the final days, most people will be led astray by evil spirits and occult teachings. The shadows of these times are already darkening the world. Nothing but the restraining presence of God the Holy Spirit is holding back the floodgates of this time of evil. As we saw when we studied Genesis, advanced demonism was the mark of Noah's day; it is becoming an increasingly evident characteristic of the age in which we live<sup>1</sup>.

The only place of safety is to have the security that the REAL Christ gives.

*2 Thessalonians 2:9 The coming of the lawless one is according to **the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,***

## Completely Confusing Times are Coming

**When Christ Returns there are powerful, pervasive, and universal lies backed by the most believable signs and wonders ever witnessed on planet earth.**

What will life on earth be like during these dark times? Turn back to Revelation 12 and 13 to see.

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<sup>1</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring The Future—A Comprehensive Guide to Bible Prophecy*, Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1984, pp. 227-228.

*Revelation 12:17 And **the dragon** was enraged with the woman, and **he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.***

*Revelation 13:7 It was **granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them.** And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.*

When Jesus came to earth He was God in human flesh. As the Christ He was the expression of all the promises of God. And to think that **the Christ** in all His grace and beauty came to earth, stayed for 30 plus years, was rejected as false and fake, and **almost no one followed Him**, is bad enough.

But to know that Satan is going to send to earth the expression of all of mankind's desires in the person of the antichrist, and in a very short time **almost all of the earth** will follow him!

Imagine a leader as winsome as Reagan, as fearless as Alexander the Great, as mesmerizing as Hitler, as beloved by his people as George Washington, as great a leader as Moses, as unstoppable and Ghengis Khan, and as spiritually charismatic as David—all in ONE man.

Then imagine him displaying supernatural power openly, in public and seen by way of the electronic media—by all of the earth!

It will appear that he is from Heaven. He will claim to be god. He will do miracles that everyone can see and believe in-- and will offer himself to the world as their Christ.

There is a day soon coming when most of the people of earth will want to follow this ultimate super-man. That is the saddest commentary on the fallen heart of humanity there could ever be. Wanting always the wrong choice.

Pray

We have had several warm up acts by Satan for this future main event of the final antichrist. Most clearly we can see the way Satan works, in the life and accomplishments of Adolph Hitler. Hitler showed the world what one man can lift a nation from the depths of economic ruin to the heights of power in a very short time (1933-1939) and then that one man can lead the world into the deadliest war of all times (1939-1945). In six years Hitler came uncomfortably close to conquering the world. Hitler was a vivid example of Satan indwelling and completely harnessing one man.

## **Satan Looks for Rebels**

Lucifer was the original rebel. He is looking for rebels to enlist for his own selfish purposes. Rebellion against authority makes a person a prime target for satanic attack.

A prime example of the rebellion-occult connection is Adolph Hitler. Hitler's early life could be characterized by one word, "failure." He eked out a meager existence by living on his dead mother's limited savings and an Orphan's Pension which came from his father's service in the Customs Department. His attempt at higher education was thwarted. He wanted to be an artist and so applied at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. They refused to accept him because his sketches were not up to the standards they required. Next, he applied to the School of Architecture and was refused. Author Trevor Ravenscroft says "...unable to make friends, Hitler became day by day a more solitary and embittered figure."

To make a long story short, Hitler was angry at God and society because of his plight in life, therefore he rebelled against God and society. In his quest for power to change his plight young Hitler turned to the occult. He began by spending all his free time in the Hofberg Library in Vienna, Austria reading books on the history of the occult and Eastern religions. The occult seemed to offer the power Adolph was searching for.

One of the primary characteristics of those who get involved in the occult is rebellion against authority. This rebellion is usually evident in one or more of the following three areas--rebellion against parents, rebellion against society, and rebellion against Christianity.

Why do many of those who rebel against parents, society and Christianity often end up involved in the occult? Those who know the Bible can tell you. According to I Samuel 15:23a rebellion and occult involvement are linked. The verse says,

*"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry..."*

## **Beware of Giving Place to the Devil**

Listen to Paul's stern warning in Ephesians 4:27, "nor give place to the devil."

Everywhere and always demons have lurked in the dark for the moment when a person becomes weak, when they arbitrarily abandon his human situation in the world order founded by God for him...after the first voluntary downward step he is compelled to the second and third with rapidly increasing speed...man is unprotected against evil without the living God; he is like a boat without oars, exposed to the tempest, or like a baby without a mother, or like a cloud which dissolves"<sup>2</sup>

## **Satan, Demons and Supernatural Power**

The demons that controlled the demented soul of Adolph Hitler lured him and Germany into World War II and then abandoned both him and his country to their fate. Hitler and his fellow conspirators came close to succeeding. They failed because the time was not

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, pp. 197-198.

yet ripe in the counsels of God for the forces of Satan to triumph. However, the whole Nazi era was a dress rehearsal for the coming of the beast and the consequent baptism of unregenerate mankind into just such a religion.<sup>3</sup>

## **Hitler, like Satan—was a Destroyer**

Hitler found that Satan lived up to the titles given him in Revelation 9:11 "And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." The translation of both words is "destroyer".

Hitler was used by Satan to destroy six million plus of God's chosen people. Multiplied thousands more were destroyed in war. Then in mockery of Hitler himself, Satan motivated him to commit suicide, destroying himself.

## **Rebellion Attracts Satan**

Always remember that rebellion against your parents, rebellion against God or rebellion against authority is Dangerous with a capital "D." It is an open invitation to Satan to destroy your life!

Christ, on the other hand offers you an abundant life. If you have never trusted Christ as your Savior, I would urge you to receive him today. When you call upon Christ to save you from your sins, God delivers you from the power of darkness and brings you into the wonderful kingdom of His Son<sup>4</sup>.

*Why does Satan promote false teaching and doctrine? As we saw this morning—only the REAL Christ can sign God's Name across your life.*

## **The ONLY Protection from this Ultimate Angel is The Signature of God**

When you call upon Christ in repentant faith, God saves you. Salvation is the greatest work of God in the universe. Some years ago a man in a penitentiary studied a Moody correspondence course. He found Christ. In answer to one of the questions which gave him an opportunity to express where he stood in relation to his newfound faith, he wrote down: "I am a new man in an old body." It was a most perceptive remark. For that is what salvation is.

But it will go even further than that saved prisoner realized. One day he will be a new man in a new body. I like to call the work of salvation the signature of God. When God

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<sup>3</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring The Future—A Comprehensive Guide to Bible Prophecy*, Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1984, pp. 227-228.

<sup>4</sup> Sources used, quoted, and adapted: Gerald Suster, *Hitler: The Occult Messiah*; Adolph Hitler's Occult Connections, Copyright © 1992, David L. Brown.

writes Himself--across our lives. Listen to this summary of what happens to each of us who come by faith to God through Christ.

Write these in your Bible, believe them, live them, share them as you act on the reality of God's Signature across your life!

**REGENERATION: When God Changes my Heart.** Ezekiel 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

**CONVERSION: When God Changes my Life.** Matthew 18:3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, **unless you are converted** and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

**REPENTANCE: When God Changes my Mind.** Matthew 3:8 Therefore bear **fruits worthy of repentance**,

**ADOPTION: When God Changes my Family.** *Romans 8:14-17 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but **you received the Spirit of adoption** by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

**SANCTIFICATION: When God Changes my Behavior.** *Hebrews 10:14-16 For by one offering He has perfected forever those **who are being sanctified**. But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"*

**JUSTIFICATION: When God Changes my State.** *Romans 5:1 Therefore, having **been justified by faith, we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

What does it mean to be "justified"? In popular, everyday language the word can be paraphrased: "just as if I'd never sinned"

Some years ago a wealthy Englishman bought a Rolls Royce car and took it to France on his vacation. It broke down. At great expense the factory flew out a mechanic and not only repaired the car but entertained the customer in the best available hotel. When he arrived home he expected to receive a large bill but none came. Eventually he wrote, asking for his account to be rendered.

He received this reply: "Dear Sir, We have no record of anything ever having gone wrong with your car." That is exactly what it means to be justified. It means that God has no record of anything ever having gone wrong in our lives.

GLORIFICATION: **When God Changes my Place.** *John 17:24 "Father, I desire that **they also whom You gave Me may be with Me** where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world<sup>5</sup>.*

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<sup>5</sup> Phillips, 100 New Testament Outlines, #100.

## The Application (Eph. 4:25–32)

Paul was not content to explain a principle and then leave it. He always applied it to the different areas of life that need to feel its power. Paul even dared to name sins. Five different sins are named in this section, and Paul told us to avoid them and he explained why.

**Lying (v. 25).** A lie is a statement that is contrary to fact, spoken with the intent to deceive. If I tell you it is noon, and then discover that my watch is wrong, I did not tell a lie. But if I gave you the wrong time so you would be late to a meeting and I would benefit from it, that would be a lie. Satan is a liar (John 8:44); and he wants us to believe that God is a liar. “Yea, hath God said?” (Gen. 3:1) Whenever we speak truth, the Spirit of God works, but whenever we tell a lie, Satan goes to work. We like to believe that we help people by lying to them, but such is not the case. We may not see the sad consequences immediately, but ultimately they will come. “Ye know that no lie is of the truth” (1 John 2:21). Hell is prepared for “whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” (Rev. 22:15). This does not mean that anybody who ever told a lie will go to hell, but rather that those whose lives are controlled by lies—they love lies and they make lies—are lost forever. The Christian’s life is controlled by truth.

Note the reason Paul gave for telling the truth: We belong to each other in Christ. He urged us to build the body in love (Eph. 4:16) and he urged us to build the body in truth. “Speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). As “members one of another” we affect each other, and we cannot build each other apart from truth. The first sin that was judged in the early church was the sin of lying (Acts 5:1–11).

**Anger (vv. 26–27).** Anger is an emotional arousal caused by something that displeases us. In itself, anger is not a sin, because even God can be angry (Deut. 9:8, 20; Ps. 2:12). Several times in the Old Testament the phrase appears, “the anger of the Lord” (Num. 25:4; Jer. 4:8; 12:13). The holy anger of God is a part of His judgment against sin, as illustrated in our Lord’s anger when He cleansed the temple (Matt. 21:12–13). The Bible often speaks of anger “being kindled” (Gen. 30:2; Deut. 6:15), as though anger can be compared to fire. Sometimes a man’s anger smolders, and this we would call *malice*; but this same anger can suddenly burst forth and destroy, and this we would call *wrath*.

It is difficult for us to practice a truly holy anger or righteous indignation because our emotions are tainted by sin, and we do not have the same knowledge that God has in all matters. God sees everything clearly and knows everything completely, and we do not. The New Testament principle seems to be that the believer should be angry at sin but loving toward people. “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil” (Ps. 97:10).

It is possible to be angry and not sin, but if we do sin, we must settle the matter quickly and not let the sun go down on our wrath. “Agree with thine adversary quickly” (Matt. 5:25). “Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone” (Matt. 18:15). The fire of anger, if not quenched by loving forgiveness, will spread and defile and destroy the work of God. According to Jesus, anger is the first step toward murder (Matt. 5:21–26), because anger gives the devil a foothold in our lives, and Satan is a murderer (John 8:44). Satan hates God and God’s people, and when he finds a believer with the sparks of anger in his heart, he fans those sparks, adds fuel to the fire, and does a great deal of damage to God’s people and God’s church. Both lying and anger “give peace to the devil” (Eph. 4:27).

When I was living in Chicago, one out of every thirty-five deaths was a murder, and most of these murders involved relatives and friends. They are what the law calls “crimes of passion.” Two friends get into an argument (often while gambling), one of them gets angry, pulls a gun or knife, and kills his friend. Horace was right when he said, “Anger is momentary insanity.”

A woman tried to defend her bad temper by saying, “I explode and then it’s all over with.”

“Yes,” replied a friend, “just like a shotgun—but look at the damage that’s left behind.”

“Anyone can become angry,” wrote Aristotle. “But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—this is not easy.”

Solomon has a good solution: “A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger” (Prov. 15:1).

**Stealing (v. 28).** “Thou shalt not steal” is one of the Ten Commandments, and when God gave that commandment, He instituted the right of private ownership of property. A man has the right to turn his strength

into gain, and to keep that gain and use it as he sees fit. God gave numerous laws to the Jews for the protection of their property, and these principles have become a part of our law today. Stealing was particularly a sin of the slaves in Paul's day. Usually they were not well cared for and were always in need, and the law gave them almost no protection. When he wrote to Titus, Paul urged him to admonish the slaves not to "purloin" but to be faithful to their masters (Titus 2:10). But it was not only the slaves, but citizens in general, who were addicted to thievery, for Paul wrote to people in the Ephesian church who were gainfully employed (Eph. 4:28).

Just as Satan is a liar and a murderer, he is also a thief. "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10). He turned Judas into a thief (John 12:6) and he would do the same to us if he could. When he tempted Eve, he led her to become a thief, for she took the fruit that was forbidden. And she, in turn, made Adam a thief. The first Adam was a thief and was cast out of Paradise, but the Last Adam, Christ, turned to a thief and said, "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Paul added motive to the admonition. We should tell the truth because we are "members one of another." We should control our anger lest we "give place to the devil." We should work, and not steal, so that we might be able "to give to him that needeth." You would expect Paul to have said, "Let him work that he might take care of himself and not be tempted to steal." Instead, he lifted human labor to a much higher level. We work that we might be able to help others. If we steal, we hurt others; therefore, we should work that we might be able to help others. Even honest labor could become a selfish thing, and this Paul seeks to avoid. Of course, it was a fundamental rule in the early church that "if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thes. 3:10). A lazy Christian robs himself, others, and God. Of course, Paul was not writing to believers who could not work because of handicaps, but with those who would not work.

Paul himself was an example of a hard worker, for while he was establishing local churches, he labored as a tentmaker. Every Jewish rabbi was taught a trade, for, said the rabbis, "If you do not teach your son a trade, you teach him to be a thief." The men that God called in the Scriptures were busy working when their call came. Moses was caring for sheep; Gideon was threshing wheat; David was minding his father's flock; and the first four disciples were either casting nets or mending them. Jesus Himself was a carpenter.

**Corrupt speech (v. 29).** The mouth and heart are connected. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). We expect a change in speech when a person becomes a Christian. It is interesting to trace the word *mouth* through the Book of Romans and see how Christ makes a difference in a man's speech. The sinner's mouth is "full of cursing and bitterness" (Rom. 3:14); but when he trusts Christ, he gladly confesses with his mouth "Jesus Christ is Lord" (Rom. 10:9-10, NIV). As a condemned sinner, his mouth is stopped before the throne of God (Rom. 3:19); but as a believer, his mouth is opened to praise God (Rom. 15:6). Change the heart and you change the speech. Paul certainly knew the difference, for when he was an unsaved rabbi, he was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1). But when he trusted Christ, a change took place: "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9:11). From "preying" to "praying" in one step of faith!

The word *corrupt*, used in Matthew 7:17-18, refers to rotten fruit. It means "that which is worthless, bad, or rotten." Our words do not have to be "dirty" to be worthless. Sometimes we go along with the crowd and try to impress people with the fact that we are not as puritanical as they think. Peter may have had this motive in mind when he was accused by the girl of being one of Christ's disciples. "Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, 'I know not the man'" (Matt. 26:74). The appetites of the old life sometimes show up when we permit "filthy communication" out of the mouth (Col. 3:8). Remember, before we were saved, we lived in spiritual death (Eph. 2:1-3) and, like Lazarus, our personal corruption produced an odor that was not pleasing to God. No wonder Paul wrote, "Their throat is an open sepulchre" (Rom. 3:13).

The remedy is to make sure the heart is full of blessing. So fill the heart with the love of Christ so that only truth and purity can come out of the mouth. Never have to say, "Now, take this with a grain of salt." Paul told us to put the salt of God's grace in everything we say. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt" (Col. 4:6). And keep in mind that your words have power, either for good or evil. Paul tells us to speak in such a way that what we say will build up our hearers, and not tear them down. Our words should minister grace and help to draw others closer to Christ. Satan, of course, encourages speech that will tear people down

and destroy the work of Christ. If you need to be reminded of the power of the tongue, read the third chapter of James.

**Bitterness (vv. 30–32).** These verses warn us against several sins of the attitude and amplify what Paul wrote about anger. *Bitterness* refers to a settled hostility that poisons the whole inner man. Somebody does something we do not like, so we harbor ill will against him. “Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them” (Col. 3:19). Bitterness leads to wrath, which is the explosion on the outside of the feelings on the inside. Wrath and anger often lead to brawling (clamor) or blasphemy (evil speaking). The first is fighting with fists, the second is fighting with words. It is difficult to believe that Christians would act this way, but they do, and this is why Paul warned us, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Ps. 133:1).

A handsome elderly man stopped at my study one day and asked me if I would perform a wedding for him. I suggested that he bring the bride in so that we might chat together and get better acquainted, since I hesitate to marry strangers. “Before she comes in,” he said, “let me explain this wedding to you. Both of us have been married before—to each other! Over thirty years ago, we got into an argument, I got mad, and we separated. Then we did a stupid thing and got a divorce. I guess we were both too proud to apologize. Well, all these years we’ve lived alone, and now we see how foolish we’ve been. Our bitterness has robbed us of the joys of life, and now we want to remarry and see if the Lord won’t give us a few years of happiness before we die.” Bitterness and anger, usually over trivial things, make havoc of homes, churches, and friendships.

Paul gives three reasons why we must avoid bitterness. First, *it grieves the Holy Spirit*. He lives within the Christian, and when the heart is filled with bitterness and anger, the Spirit grieves. We parents know just a little of this feeling when our children at home fight with each other. The Holy Spirit is happiest in an atmosphere of love, joy, and peace, for these are the “fruit of the Spirit” that He produces in our lives as we obey Him. The Holy Spirit cannot leave us, because He has sealed us until that day when Christ returns to take us home. We do not lose our salvation because of our sinful attitudes, but we certainly lose the joy of our salvation and the fullness of the Spirit’s blessing.

Second, our sin *grieves God the Son*, who died for us. Third, it *grieves God the Father* who forgave us when we trusted Christ. Here Paul put his finger on the basic cause of a bitter attitude: We cannot forgive people. An unforgiving spirit is the devil’s playground, and before long it becomes the Christian’s battleground. If somebody hurts us, either deliberately or unintentionally, and we do not forgive him, then we begin to develop bitterness within, which hardens the heart. We should be tenderhearted and kind, but instead we are hardhearted and bitter. Actually, we are not hurting the person who hurt us; we are only hurting ourselves. Bitterness in the heart makes us treat others the way Satan treats them, when we should treat others the way God has treated us. In His gracious kindness, God has forgiven us, and we should forgive others. We do not forgive for *our* sake (though we do get a blessing from it) or even for *their* sake, but for *Jesus’* sake. Learning how to forgive and forget is one of the secrets of a happy Christian life.

Review once again the motives for “walking in purity”: We are members one of another; Satan wants to get a foothold in our lives; we ought to share with others; we ought to build one another up; and we ought not to grieve God. And, after all, we have been raised from the dead—so why wear the graveclothes? Jesus says of us as He said of Lazarus: “Loose him, and let him go!” 6

## THE THINGS WHICH MUST BE ABANDONED

EPHESIANS 4:17–24

I say this and I solemnly lay it upon you in the Lord—you must no longer live the kind of life the Gentiles live, for their minds are concerned with empty things; their understandings are darkened; they are strangers from the life God gives, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the petrifying of their hearts. They have come to a stage when they are past feeling; and in their shameless wantonness they have abandoned themselves to every kind of

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6Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

unclean conduct in the insatiable lust of their desires. But that is not the way that you have learned Christ, if indeed you have really listened to him, and have been taught in him, as the true teaching in Jesus is. You must stop living in your former way of life. You must put off your old manhood, which is perishing, as deceitful desires are bound to make it do. You must be renewed in the spirit of your minds. You must put on the new manhood, created after God's pattern, in righteousness and in true holiness.

PAUL appeals to his converts to leave their old way of life and to turn to Christ's. In this passage he picks out what he considers the essential characteristics of heathen life. The heathen are concerned with empty things which do not matter; their minds are darkened because of their ignorance. Then comes the salient word; their hearts are *petrified*.

The word which Paul uses for the *petrifying* of their hearts is grim and terrible. It is *πομρομυσις*. *Πομρομυσις* comes from *πομρος*, which originally meant a stone that was harder than marble. It came to have certain medical uses. It was used for the chalk stone which can form in the joints and completely paralyse action. It was used of the callus that forms where a bone has been broken and re-set, a callus which is harder than the bone itself. Finally the word came to mean the loss of all power of sensation; it described something which had become so hardened, so petrified that it had no power to feel at all.

That is what Paul says the heathen life is like. It has become so hardened that it has lost the power of feeling. In the *Epistle to a Young Friend*, Robert Burns wrote about sin:

“I waive the quantum o’ the sin,  
The hazard of concealing;  
But och! it hardens a’ within,  
And petrifies the feeling!”

The terror of sin is its petrifying effect. The process of sin is quite discernible. No man becomes a great sinner all at once. At first he regards sin with horror. When he sins, there enters into his heart remorse and regret. But if he continues to sin there comes a time when he loses all sensation and can do the most shameful things without any feeling at all. His conscience is petrified.

Paul uses two other terrible Greek words to describe the heathen way of life. He says that they have abandoned themselves to every kind of unclean conduct in *the insatiable lust of their desires*; and that they have done so in their *shameless wantonness*.

The word for shameless wantonness is *aselgeia*. It is defined by Plato as “impudence”; and by another writer as “preparedness for every pleasure.” It is defined by Basil as “a disposition of the soul incapable of bearing the pain of discipline.” The great characteristic of *selgeia* is this—the bad man usually tries to hide his sin; but the man who has *aselgeia* in his soul does not care how much he shocks public opinion so long as he can gratify his desires. Sin can get such a grip of a man that he is lost to decency and shame. He is like a drug taker who first takes the drug in secret, but comes to a stage when he openly pleads for the drug on which he has become dependent. A man can become such a slave of liquor that he does not care who sees him drunk. A man can let his sexual desires so master him that he does not care who sees him satisfy them.

The Christless man does all this in the *insatiable lust of his desires*. The word is *pleonexia*, another terrible word, which the Greeks defined as “arrogant greediness,” as “the accursed love of possessing,” as “the unlawful desire for the things which belong to others.” It has been defined as the spirit in which a man is always ready to sacrifice his neighbour to his own desires. *Pleonexia* is the irresistible desire to have what we have no right to possess. It might issue in the theft of material things; it might issue in the spirit which tramples on other people to get its own way; it might issue in sexual sin.

In the heathen world, Paul saw three terrible things. He saw men's hearts so petrified that they were not even aware that they were sinning; he saw men so dominated by sin that shame was lost and decency forgotten; he saw men so much at the mercy of their desires that they did not care whose life they injured and whose innocence they destroyed so long as these desires were satisfied. These are exactly the sins of the Christless world today, sins that can be seen invading life at every point and stalking the streets of every great city.

Paul urges his converts to have done with that kind of life. He uses a vivid way of speaking. He says: “Put off your old way of life as you would put off an old suit of clothes; clothe yourself in a new way; put off your sins, and put on the righteousness and the holiness which God can give you.”

## THINGS WHICH MUST BE BANISHED FROM LIFE

EPHESIANS 4:25–32

So then strip yourself of falsehood, and let each of you speak the truth with his neighbour, because we are all members of the same body. Be angry—but be angry in such a way that your anger is not a sin. Do not let the sun set on your wrath, and do not give the devil any opportunity. Let him who was a thief steal no more; rather let him take to hard work, and to producing good with his hands, in order that he may be able to share with the man who is in need. Do not allow any foul word to issue from your mouth; but let your words be good, designed for necessary edification, that they may bring benefit to those who hear them. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you are sealed until the day of your redemption comes. Let all bitterness, all outbreaks of passion, all long-lived anger, all loud talking, all insulting language be removed from you with all evil. Show yourselves kind to one another, merciful, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

PAUL has just been saying that when a man becomes a Christian, he must put off his old life as a man puts off a coat for which he has no further use. Here he speaks of the things which must be banished from the Christian life.

(i) There must be no more falsehood. There is more than one kind of lie in this world.

There is the lie of speech, sometimes deliberate and sometimes almost unconscious. Dr. Johnson has an interesting bit of advice in regard to the bringing up of children. “Accustom your children constantly to this (the telling of the truth); if a thing happened at one window, and they, when relating it, say that it happened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them; you do not know where deviation from truth will end. ... It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentional lying, that there is so much falsehood in the world.” Truth demands a deliberate effort.

There is also the lie of silence, and maybe it is even commoner. Andre Maurois, in a memorable phrase, speaks of “the menace of things unsaid.” It may be that in some discussion a man by his silence gives approval to some course of action which he knows is wrong. It may be that a man withholds warning or rebuke when he knows quite well he should have given it.

Paul gives the reason for telling the truth. It is because we are all members of the same body. We can live in safely only because the senses and the nerves pass true messages to the brain. If they took to passing false messages, if, for instance, they told the brain that something was cool and touchable when in fact it was hot and burning, life would very soon come to an end. A body can function healthily only when each part of it passes true messages to the brain. If then we are all bound into one body, that body can function properly only when we speak the truth.

(ii) There must be anger in the Christian life, but it must be the right kind of anger. Bad temper and irritability are without defence; but there is an anger without which the world would be a poorer place. The world would have lost much without the blazing anger of Wilberforce against the slave trade or of Shaftesbury against the labour conditions of the nineteenth century.

There was a certain rugged bluntness about Dr. Johnson. When he thought a thing was wrong, he said so with force. When he was about to publish the *Tour to the Hebrides*, Hannah More asked him to mitigate some of its asperities. She tells that his answer was that “he would not cut off his claws, nor make his tiger a cat, to please anybody.” There is a place for the tiger in life; and when the tiger becomes a tabby cat, something is lost.

There were times when Jesus was terribly and majestically angry. He was angry when the scribes and Pharisees were watching to see if he would heal the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath day (Mark 3:5). It was not their criticism of himself at which he was angry; he was angry that their rigid orthodoxy desired to impose unnecessary suffering on a fellow creature. He was angry when he made a whip and drove the changers of money and the sellers of victims from the Temple courts (John 2:13–17).

F. W. Robertson of Brighton tells in one of his letters that he bit his lips until they bled when he met on the street a certain man whom he knew to be luring a pure young girl to destruction. John Wesley said: "Give me a hundred men who fear nothing but God, and *who hate nothing but sin*, and who know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, and I will shake the world."

The anger which is selfish and uncontrolled is a sinful and hurtful thing, which must be banished from the Christian life. But the selfless anger which is disciplined into the service of Christ and of our fellow men is one of the great dynamic forces of the world.

## THINGS WHICH MUST BE BANISHED FROM LIFE

### EPHESIANS 4:25–32 (CONTINUED)

(iii) PAUL goes on to say that the Christian must never let the sun set upon his wrath. Plutarch tells us that the disciples of Pythagoras had a rule of their society, that if, during the day, anger had made them speak insultingly to each other, before the sun set they shook hands and kissed each other and were reconciled. There was a Jewish Rabbi whose prayer it was that he might never go to sleep with any bitter thought against a brother man within his mind.

Paul's advice is sound, because the longer we postpone mending a quarrel, the less likely we are ever to mend it. If there is trouble between us and anyone else, if there is trouble in a Church or a fellowship or any society where men meet, the only way to deal with it is at once. The longer it is left to flourish, the more bitter it will grow. If we have been in the wrong, we must pray to God to give us grace to admit that it was so; and even if we have been right, we must pray to God to give us the graciousness which will enable us to take the first step to put matters right.

Along with this phrase Paul puts another command. The Greek can equally well mean two things. It can mean: "Don't give the devil his opportunity." An unhealed breach is a magnificent opportunity for the devil to sow dissension. Many a time a Church has been torn into factions because two people quarrelled and let the sun set upon their wrath. But there is another meaning which this phrase can have. The word for devil in Greek is *losdiabo*; but *diabolos* is also the normal Greek for a *slanderer*. Luther, for instance, took this to mean: "Give the slanderer no place in your life." It may well be that this is the true meaning of what Paul wishes to say. No one in this world can do more damage than the slanderous tale-bearer. As Coleridge wrote in *Christabel*:

"Alas! they had been friends in youth;  
But whispering tongues can poison truth,"

There are reputations murdered over the teacups every day; and when a man sees a tale-bearer coming, he would do well to shut the door in his face.

(iv) The man who was a thief must become an honest workman. This was necessary advice, for in the ancient world thieving was rampant. It was very common in two places, at the docks and above all in the public baths. The public baths were the clubs of the time; and stealing the belongings of the bathers was one of the commonest crimes in any Greek city.

The interesting thing about this saying is the reason Paul gives for being an honest workman. He does not say: "Become an honest workman so that you may support yourself." He says: "Become an honest workman so that you may have something to give away to those who are poorer than yourself." Here is a new idea and a new ideal—that of working in order to give away.

James Agate, tells of a letter from Arnold Bennett, the famous novelist, to a less fortunate writer. Bennett was an ambitious and in many ways a worldly man; but in this letter to a fellow writer whom he hardly knew, he says: "I have just been looking at my bankbook; and I find that I have a hundred pounds which I don't need; I am sending you a cheque herewith for that amount."

In modern society no man has overmuch to give away but we do well to remember the Christian ideal is that we work, not to amass things, but to be able, if need be, to give them away

(v) Paul forbids all foul-mouthed speaking; and then goes on to put the same thing positively. The Christian should be characterized by words which help his fellow men. As Moffatt translates it, Eliphaz the Temanite paid Job a tremendous compliment. “Your words,” he said, “have kept men on their feet” (Job 4:4). Such are the words that every Christian ought to speak.

(vi) Paul urges us not to grieve the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the guide of life. When we act contrary to the counsel of our parents when we are young, we hurt them. Similarly, to act contrary to the guidance of the Holy Spirit is to grieve the Spirit and to hurt the heart of God, the Father, who, through the Spirit, sent his word to us.

## THINGS WHICH MUST BE BANISHED FROM LIFE

Ephesians 4:25–32 (*continued*)

PAUL ends this chapter with a list of things which must go from life.

(a) There is *bitterness* (*pikria*). The Greeks defined this word as *long-standing resentment*, as the spirit which refuses to be reconciled. So many of us have a way of nursing our wrath to keep it warm, of brooding over the insults and the injuries which we have received. Every Christian might well pray that God would teach him how to forget.

(b) There are *outbreaks of passion* (*thumos*) and *long-lived anger* (*orge*). 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. On the other hand, they described *orge* as anger which has become habitual. To the Christian the burst of temper and the long-lived anger are both alike forbidden.

(c) There is *loud talking* and *insulting language*. A certain famous preacher tells how his wife used to advise him, “In the pulpit, keep your voice down.” Whenever, in any discussion or argument, we become aware that our voice is raised, it is time to stop. The Jews spoke about what they called “the sin of insult,” and maintained that God does not hold him guiltless who speaks insultingly to his brother man.

Lear said of Cordelia:

“Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.”

It would save a great deal of heartbreak in this world if we simply learned to keep our voices down and if, when we had nothing good to say to a person, we did not say anything at all. The argument which has to be supported in a shout is no argument; and the dispute which has to be conducted in insults is not an argument but a brawl.

So Paul comes to the summing up of his advice. He tells us to be *kind* (*chrestos*). The Greeks defined this quality as the disposition of mind which thinks as much of its neighbour’s affairs as it does of its own. Kindness has learned the secret of looking outwards all the time, and not inwards. He tells us to forgive others as God forgave us. So, in one sentence, Paul lays down the law of personal relationships—that we should treat others as Jesus Christ has treated us.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Barclay, William, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians (Revised Edition)*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1976.