

Work and Words

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Grab your Bibles and let's go back to Ephesians. We've been there on Sunday nights for quite a while and I'm going to backtrack a little bit and pick up a section that I had honestly skipped. We're in that section of Ephesians where the apostle is giving such practical brass tacks, where the rubber meets the road exhortations and these are so simple and so straightforward, but now remember, Christianity is not about moral improvement. It's not about creating an environment so that we can raise our kids in a cleaner environment, have more decent and moral people. That's obviously the byproduct, the overflow, and that's why we have the order we have in these epistles. For example, again as you start Ephesians, you have the rich expounding of the great doctrine of salvation and how sovereign grace is central in God's calling and redeeming of men and sealing them, is predestining them and his foreknowledge of them, and these glorious truths that are all-encompassed in God's amazing love for his children, his church. And that song we just sang talks about the love of God, it undoes us, if you will. We're undone by it, I guess I should say. And how when you think on that God would pick me out and cast his total capacity to save upon me, all the power of the Godhead is dedicated to your redemption and your eternal salvation.

Now included in that is that he comes to your life through the Gospel, he brings you to that place of repentance and faith through the preaching of the Gospel, sometimes the sharing of the Gospel, and then through the Spirit's work in your life, you believe on Christ and you become a new creation, the Bible calls it. Paul here writing to the church at Ephesus in chapter 2 says, "You're made alive in Christ. You went from spiritual death to becoming a true spiritual living being." Then he expounds as we get over in this section we're in now, on the practical outworkings of this new creation, this new life, that you have a new Father and you have a new fellowship, even more than that, a new family and a new fellowship. I use the word "fellowship" in terms of your walk, how you live your life.

Notice, if you will, in Ephesians 5:1. This is just review, our setting a foundation for this evening. He says, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children." So just like a child mimics his father or her mother, we are to mimic our God. We are to be striving and walking in a new pattern of progressive sanctification so that we are increasingly like the high and holy character of our God, by the way, because he is our Father. You no longer

have your old father, Satan. You're no longer just the son of an earthly father. God literally is your Father. That's who you are by grace. What a marvelous thought that is.

He says you're a part of a new family. Look at chapter 2, back there, if you would. Look at verse 19. Chapter 2, verse 19, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household." He says you have a new Father, you've got a brand new family, and now you need to walk in new fellowship. And actually chapter 4 through chapter 6 outlines how we now fellowship with one another, how we live out our lives in concert with one another in the local church.

So he comes to this new section. We'll begin tonight in verse 28 of chapter 4 and go through verse 1 of chapter 5. Look at it there together with me and I'll read it. Verse 28, chapter 4, "He who steals must steal no longer." That's pretty simple, isn't it? Pretty straightforward. Did anybody miss that?

28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. 29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. 30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. [Then chapter 5, verse 1] 1 Therefore be imitators of God,

In other words, all that's he already said is summarized in chapter 5:1, "Therefore be imitators of God." This is how God would be. You be like God because you're his, end of chapter 5, verse 1, you are his beloved children.

So we want to talk about, first of all, working and sharing. I. Working and sharing. Now again, as we see throughout the Scriptures and particularly in this epistle, he's going to say, "There's something I want you to strive to take off. You're to take out some things and you're to put some new things on in the place of that which you have taken out." So subpoint A under working and sharing would be: the negative that is to be set aside. The negative, you could even say the false. In other words, this is something that doesn't fit who you are anymore. Quit acting like you're somebody else's child. Quit acting like you're not a part of God's family.

The false, the negative is to be set aside and that's where he simply states in verse 28, "He who steals must steal no longer." Now I'm firmly in the belief that some of these things were happening among the professed believers at this ancient local church in Ephesus. You know, he talked about all kinds of sexual immoralities and issues in our last sermon together on Ephesians, and what you've got to understand is these folks were converted out of the most coarse, perverse, crude and immoral culture. Wouldn't it be wonderful if

the moment you believed, all of the past was just cleaned out of your life and you had no more temptations. And like so many third world cultures that I've had the privilege of preaching the Gospel in and do pastoral training in, if you go out into the communities and out into the shops and the markets, you'll find the nationals there who are Christians will say, "Now look, lying and stealing and scheming and underhanded ways of doing business is just commonplace here. It's just understood that's how it works so be careful how you negotiate, be careful how you purchase and bargain with these street brokers." And that's because their culture is based on something other than the Judeo-Christian ethic where typically, I hope it's still somewhat true, if not mostly true, in a culture that's based on a Christian ethic, that's seen as wrong and when you run into somebody who functions by deception or underhandedness, that's the exception rather than the rule.

Well, I'm convinced in ancient Ephesus, like all of the world that I've ever seen that has no Christian background in their culture, that you have lying and scheming and stealing and grossness and crudeness and perversion. It's just a part of the culture. And as our country, our beloved United States of America, as we increasingly turn our backs on God, do we not see the most bizarre and corrupt things being done? I think one of the most telling things about godlessness of our culture is how social media news and the news outlet in general are just obsessed with junior high girl drama. Everything somebody's feelings are hurt, So-and-so shamed somebody. It's just the silliest nonsense and it's news. It ought to be just laughed off and overlooked about 90% of it. And it's just the world that we live in and I guess that's to be expected when you have all these ways of communication today and people feel like they've got to say something all the time.

Well, anyway, the Ephesians are saved out of a very godless culture and I think without doubt, they brought so much of that into the church. Now I do not believe it was at the same level but these kind of things would find themselves creeping up within the congregation and so Paul would write, "Now look now, I expect you to be fighting these things, repenting of these things and keeping these things out of your lives as Christians, individually as Christians and as you function one with the other."

So put off stealing. Of course, we know in Exodus 20:15, this was a foundational truth in God's law that he gave through Moses, "Thou shalt not steal." That, of course, forbids everything that might hinder our neighbor's wealth or outward estate. Charles Hodge, the theologian, said, "It's not just theft punishable by civil laws but any and all unjust acquisitions."

Now, oftentimes we find that there are many things that become acceptable to the customs of men or the customs of a certain culture, but they're just different forms of theft in the eyes of God's law. All forms of dishonesty are stealing. Dishonesty is a way we can sometimes steal from others. Boice in his commentary lists some ways we are stealing, that we are thieves and we may not even realize it. First of all, you have stolen from God when you fail to worship him. I think it could be said accurately that some of the brethren who seldom if ever attend on Sunday night are stealing from God a devotion and a worship with the saints of God that God's ordained that he receive.

It's rightfully his. Did you hear that? You may not feel like worshiping him but you have an obligation to. Have you ever found that if you come into church and you pray with the saints of God and you begin singing, about halfway through the second song your heart catches on? It lifts you up. You get in the flow and all of a sudden what you knew was right, your emotions begin to join in on it. Well, you see, we owe that to God. He is deserving of worship. Can I get an amen on Sunday night? Amen. He's worthy of worship.

Now if you don't know him, he doesn't want it, but if you know him, there are times when you have to get your heart out of the doldrums, you come into church spiritually sloppy and you need to throw yourself into the worship of God because you know that's the truth of your heart and you want to feel it again. He's worthy of worship. Sometimes we steal from God by not faithfully worshiping him.

Jeremiah 13:11 says, "For as the waistband clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me," declares the LORD, 'that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise and for glory; but they did not listen.'" That's a picture of what God does for us through Jesus Christ. He makes us a people for himself, for praise and for glory.

We rob God, we're thieves when we do not spend energies honoring him like we ought to. We sometimes steal from our employer if we do not give our employer our best. We steal from customers if we overcharge or sell inferior products as if they were superior. We steal from others when we use our tongues and damage their reputation. Some things are true but you don't need to talk about it. That's stealing a person's reputation. We even steal from ourselves when we waste time, talents and resources that God's entrusted to us. God says we must steal no longer. He's saying, "Put it aside." And I charge you on this Sunday night, put it aside. Be determined, "I'll not do that. I'm going to draw a line in the sand. I'm not going to walk in that any longer." Thievery and stealing, it takes all kinds of forms but when the Spirit of God points it out to you, humble yourself, call it what it is and put it behind you. That's not who you are. That doesn't fit the character of your new Father. That doesn't fit the character and the reputation of your family. You're of the household of God and you're a son and a daughter of God.

Well, that's the negative, to put off. Now the positive, to put on. He says in verse 28, "He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good," it's good to labor, "so that he will have something to share with one who has need." You know, in Genesis before the fall, God gave Adam and Eve a work to do as they ruled over the rest of creation. God gave man dominion over creation. Man is on his throne over creation but it is a work. As Genesis says, they were to plant yielding seed and they were to cultivate. There was work involved before man ever sinned. Some of you think work is the result of man falling into sin. No, it wasn't. God established work before sin ever entered the picture, it's just that the blessedness of work has partially been taken away because man is now sinful. It now has a toilsome aspect to it that it should not have had had man not sinned and brought the curse upon us and upon the earth.

Exodus 20:9, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work." Galatians 6:5, "each one shall bear his own load." That speaks of work. Then I want you to turn there, 2 Thessalonians 3. Will you go over there? Just a few pages over to the right. 2 Thessalonians 3 and look at verse 8. 2 Thessalonians 3, beginning in verse 8. Paul is writing to the church at Thessalonica and he's talking about himself here when he says, verse 8, chapter 3, "nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you." You say, "Now wait a minute, pastor, you've always told us that there is a debt and an obligation that a church owes to the man of God." Well, sure they do. Look at verse 9, "not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread." Work. Instead of stealing, you work. That's simple enough, isn't it?

As we look at our culture again today, of course this is an admonition to the church, but these principles work in the world. Sometimes I see all these people protesting and rioting and sleeping in tents in the streets and all these things, and I wonder, "Why aren't they going to work? If these guys had a job, they wouldn't have time for all the protesting." And I'll tell you what would happen, if they didn't eat because they didn't work, a lot more of them would work.

That's what the Scripture says. God expects the people of God to work and to be faithful in that area. Why does he want us to work? Why should we put this on? Because it fits the character of your new Father. God is your Father. If it's the character of your new family, your new family is the household of God.

Then he says something else in verse 28 back in our original text in Ephesians. Ephesians 4:28, the last half, so work "with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need." Paul said, "Men, you ought to work in such a way as that you can provide for yourself and take care of your own needs, but also have something to help those in need." Now, it was a day with no social welfare programs of any kind. I mean, in that day if the church didn't take care of those widows and maybe those who were diseased or lame or whatever it was, they had to take care of each other. There were legitimate needs and he says, "To all of you who are able to work so that you'll have the means to take care and give to those who do not have a legitimate way to pay and provide for their own needs."

Well, there's so much in the world today about working just for ourselves. As I heard a preacher say years ago, the theme of the world is get all you can and count on all you get, and sit on the lid and poison the rest. It's all about me. It's all about me gaining. It's all about me getting.

You remember John Stossel. He hasn't been on tv lately. Now John Stossel is not a believer but he's often had, his niche I might say, was to find the real truth behind myths and the real truth behind common conceptions and notions that men held to. He did a report on that is it wealth that makes you happy, and he was interviewing people and in his research he found that a survey of 49 of the wealthiest people on Forbes' list, found out that they were no happier than the rest of us. Money Magazine polled 1,500 people and found that more money made people happier only if their incomes were already low. Once you reached about \$50,000 it made no difference at all. Whether you had \$50,000 or \$500,000, when people were polled about are you happy, everybody generally gave the same basic level of happiness.

Stossel in his research concluded that he found three things that contributed to happiness: work and a sense of esteem and value that it gives to your life to work and provide; number 2, what he called finding religion. He said, "Somehow as I surveyed these people, those that found God, those that believed on Jesus in some cases, I'm sure, they seemed to find happiness regardless of how wealthy or not wealthy they were." Then he said a third thing was a good family. Family life. Work. Finding religion. Or family life.

Now, I believe in prosperous America, and if you don't think we're all prosperous, you need to travel the world a little bit. I get tickled at some of these people that begin to say, "Well, we ought to do this and we ought to do that because we have too much." Well, if you're going to compare yourself to those who don't have much, then don't compare yourself to people in America, go other places in the world. I mean, our dear brothers and sisters in the Philippines, we can give them \$50 a month and they're ahead of everybody else financially. These things are all relative.

Stossel in his report went to a man who is in a charity line, a hand-out line, and he asked this man, "Are you poor?" And the man said, "Why, yes." And John Stossel said, "Well, do you have a place to live?" And the man said, "Yes, I have an apartment." Stossel said, "Well, do you have electricity?" He said, "Well, yes." "Do you have a microwave?" He said, "Yes." "Do you have cable and a television?" He said, "Yes." "Do you have a refrigerator?" He said, "Yes." And on and on. But he was considered poor.

We're not talking about helping people so that everybody has three flat screens. When the Bible says to help those, it means those who have legitimate need, not because they have a little less than somebody else. That's the notion of the unbiblical philosophy that's behind socialism and communism, that somehow it's wrong for anybody to have more than somebody else. Well, the Bible says it's God who makes the rich and God who makes the poor but your happiness isn't dependent on either one of those. So God is very fair in that sense.

So Paul commanded these believers to stop stealing and work and try to work and have the heart attitude that, "Lord, give me more that I might be a blessing to those around me." And one of the main ways you can be a blessing is to support the spread of the Gospel. And why would that be a wonderful way to use what extra income you may have? Because that honors your Father and God is your Father, and that honors your new

family because you're of the household of God. So he says, "Put that on. Take off stealing and put on working and work so that you might have the heart that says, 'Lord, how can I be a blessing to others?'"

Now he goes to something else here. Very, very down to earth. Verse 29, speech that edifies. Work and sharing was our first point. It is speech that edifies. And then A under II: the negative, the false that we're to be putting off, and we're to be putting these off, again, because I think these things have their way of sneaking into the body of Christ. I'm certain that they do because I've seen it. "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth." That's the negative we're to take off. "Unwholesome" means "corrupt." It means it has no positive effect. It causes rotting.

Now, it's not as simple as just, "Okay, we've found these 17 words that are corrupting words, let's leave those out." Now that wouldn't necessarily be wrong but people can say a word over here and do it with a heart tone and a heart attitude that causes it to be a corrupting word. So it's not just as easy as saying, "Well, these are cuss words or these are profanity." It's just not that easy. It's the heart attitude and intention. We're to take words that don't do anything but corrupt and rot and ruin, we're to take those things out of our speech.

One of the things we need to do is remind ourselves that speech is a wonderful gift from God. Stop right there. Your capacity to communicate with words is a marvelous, special gift from God. Animals cannot do that. Animals do not have that gift. It's one of the things that sets us apart from the animal kingdom. It's part of what makes us made in his likeness. We are man, we are humankind, we are made in the image of God. The Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." The point there being that the revelatory nature of God, his ability to speak and communicate with words, is something unique unto him and he gave that to his highest creatures, mankind. It's what gives us a dignity beyond the rest of the created order. So he says, "You're to use your speech as this wonderful special gift and use it in the dignity of the God who has this very gift and has shared it with you." We are to use that gift in goodness and in holiness and not in unwholesomeness or in rottenness.

Here's another good cross reference. Go over to James, if you would. Would you do that? Over to the right a few pages, James 3, I guess the longest treatise on exhorting us about our words. James 3, beginning in verse 1, he says, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment." In other words, let not many of you be one who uses words to instruct and teach others because you're going to be more prone to have to have something you've got to ask forgiveness for. Have you ever seen me get in the pulpit and say, "I said something and I shouldn't have said it"? Yeah, I've done that several times. I had to ask forgiveness.

Verse 2, James 3, "For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well." Here's what James is saying, "If you can get your tongue under control, the rest of you is downhill. Getting the rest of you under control is easy compared to that flapping devil in your mouth."

Verse 3, "Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell." Boy, that's strong, isn't it? He says somehow the wickedness of hell seems to affect the tongue more than any other part of the body.

Verse 7, "For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh."

Paul says to the Corinthians, "You need to watch your tongue. Don't speak things that are of rottenness where the heart intent is to run down and maim and hurt." When we correct in those rare times when as a parent, or maybe even an employee, or as a church elder you have responsibility to reprove or rebuke firmly, make sure your heart motive is the good of that person, not just to bring them to corruption. Not just to bring them down. The correction even if it's hard and harsh and occasionally it has to be, the motive should be to the building up and the betterment of that person and the glory of God.

He says that's the negative to take off, all corrupt speech, all rotten speech. Now here's B, the positive to put on. He says, "but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment." Edification, again as I was just saying, is building up, and the need of the moment means supplying what's needed at that point. Not the need according to a fallen, worldly or fleshly perspective, but the need according to a spiritual or biblical viewpoint of the situation. Sometimes when a loving word is a firm word of correction, but it's for the end of building up. That's the kind of words we're to have.

Here's a good example of how we must try to speak according to the need of the moment. Somebody might be counseling and they're talking with a person and that person according to psychology is an enabler or a co-dependent, but the Bible doesn't say anything about an enabler or a co-dependent, but the Bible does talk about idolaters. Really what they are, they are a co-idolater. When somebody is looking to some drug or some addiction and they have a dependency, they've made an idol out of something. They're to call it sin and repent of it. Sure, we have mercy on them, we have compassion to help them work out of it, but we've got to speak what's truly edifying. That's why we only do biblical counseling at Grace Life Church because I don't want to psychologically help you feel better, I want to biblically help you overcome. Those are two very different things.

Boy, I hesitate to even go here because as I thought about this very illustration, it kind of broke my heart at my calloused thoughtlessness, so I'll use my own failure as an example here. Some of you know some of the cat stories that come from my house. We have taken in stray cats before and it never worked out. They always get maimed and hurt and die and not that we did it, we didn't do anything intentionally, it just happens. One of them, the garage door came down on it and that's the way we found it. Under the garage door, how do you explain something like that? Nobody can plan anything like that.

So Pam just really doesn't like cats. I'm not crazy about cats but I thought it would be good to have a cat around the outside, you know, to keep the mice away or whatever. We had a cat. One of the cats we had, and by the way, they don't have 9 lives at my house. They barely get one and they're gone. But we had a cat and we were pulling out of the driveway in somewhat of a hurry, and my girls were fairly young. I don't remember the ages but they were fairly young and I ran over the cat with the car. You know how that feels. I thought, "Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness." I'm the husband. I'm the father. I had to take care of it.

So I get out, I look at the cat, and from all appearances, the cat's back was broken and I thought, "I'm going to have to euthanize this cat because it's suffering. It's just in a terrible situation." You know, some people take it to the vet and pay \$2,000. I'm old school. That's not what we do.

So I thought, "I need to euthanize it." Well, I ran back in the car and I really, it's really hard to tell you this. These little girls are sitting there terrified. I said, "I've run over the cat and I'm going to have to kill it." And they were just crushed. Now, when I said, "I've run over the cat and I'm going to have to kill it," who was I thinking about? Me. This was not pleasant in any way for me to have to do this but it was my responsibility, but instead of being kind and careful and tender and explaining it in a different way, I used coarse, curt, painful words that upset everyone. And to this day, I still remember how thoughtless I was with my children that day.

That's a good example. When we get under stress, ladies, when you get in a fearful situation, very often if we're not careful, the next thing that comes out of our mouths are corrupting words, hurtful words. They're not premeditated but we're still responsible for them. And boy, I hope that my girls would say, "Well, you've done better as you grew as a father." I hope I have and haven't been that coarse and that unthoughtful and that uncaring about their feelings in that situation.

Long story short, it just broke it's leg, not it's back, and I did take it to the vet and it did have a cast and unfortunately it lived a little while longer but they never live long at our house for some reason. The point is, though, in all situations, put on a word that fits the moment. That's what Paul is saying. Those words I said that day didn't fit the moment or the people listening. Use that which is edifying.

Now, here's a powerful motivation. Look at verse 30, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Now in the context, this only means one thing: if you continue stealing and not working with the heart attitude to help others who might have need, if you just brashly without caring or thinking are communicating corrupting and hurtful words to others, then you're grieving the Holy Spirit of God. You quench, you grieve the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, you see, is the author of revelation which is communicated by words. The Holy Spirit really cares about words. That's why we hold to the plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible. Plenary means the entire Bible is equally and fully inspired, and verbal means the very words are inspired. This Bible is not the inspired thoughts of God, it's not just the inspired precepts of God, it's the inspired word of God. Once you allow liberals to get you off on this limb of, "Well, it's inspired in that it communicates the general precepts or the truths." Well, that's true but that's not all that's true, it has verbal and plenary inspiration, the very words are penned that God wanted penned in his sacred book. The Holy Spirit cares about words so there's a special way, it seems, that Paul is pointing out here, that when we are not careful with words, we grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, I certainly don't think this is talking about a Christian who loves Christ and loves the body of Christ and something slips and they say something they shouldn't and they quickly say, "Oh, I'm sorry. Please forgive me." I think it's talking about a coarse and hardened lifestyle of misusing words only to tear down but not to build up.

Well, let me show you some summary truths now, beginning in verse 31 of chapter 4. He begins here by, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." Now, here we have a whole list of words. So he's saying these are the root, rotten roots, I should say, that are going to have rotten fruit coming out of you and you've got to get rid of it. Bitterness really is the root of everything he's going to talk about. A resentful spirit is a bitter spirit. A resentful spirit that refuses reconciliation, root that out. Root it out. Get it out. The word bitterness is a word for poison or poison water, more specifically in the Old Testament. There is nothing more antichrist and unattractive in a professing Christian than bitterness.

Can I say something to all of you old people like me? I'm 58 and they say that's middle age. Does that mean I'm going to live to be 116? That's not middle. I'm past middle and so are many of you, if not most of you. Do you know what I want for you? I want you to grow old sweet in Jesus Christ. Sweet and a blessing and with contentment so that young people will see your life and see your countenance and say, "I want to be like that." Do you know what that is? That's a choice to discipline your heart and mind to not live with resentfulness and a bitter spirit because it will come out in your countenance. It will come out in your heart. If you're not careful, you're going to lose your mind and they'll put you in a nursing home and you're going to be the meanest person in the nursing home saying ugly stuff. So start uprooting it now so it doesn't come out later. Amen? Some of you are nodding because you're close to the nursing home like me. You know it won't be long, perhaps.

He says, "Make sure you get rid of that bitter root." Then he talks about getting rid of wrath. That's passionate outrages. That's like the trunks and the limbs on this tree that roots are of bitterness. Then anger, a settled and sullen hostility. Then clamor and slander and malice. That's the fruit on this tree. Then clamor is an outcry or a shouting. Slander is speaking evil of a person, defaming them, purposing to destroy their reputation. Malice is that deep ill-wishing and ill-will, a plotting evil against others. Never be a part of that. Never. Like I said this morning, never be a part of planning evil because somebody else did evil. That's not who we are, Paul is saying. You've got a new Father. God is your Father. You've got a new family. You're of the household of God, now act like it. That's what he's saying.

Now, the men of this world don't act like this. They can't. They don't have the capacity to. But we do because we have new hearts. John Stott in his commentary says that malice probably includes these previous vices: the silently harbored grudges; indignant outbursts; seething rage; public quarrels; and slanderous taunts against others. These have no place in the Christian family. They are to be put off. They are to be totally rejected.

Now look at verse 32. In their place, that's the stuff we keep putting off, now put this on. Verse 32, "Be kind to one another," that's deposed toward what is good. It's a word God uses of himself because he is kind to the ungrateful, he is kind to the selfish. Luke 6:35 reminds us, "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men." Be kind. Be kind.

I had the wildest scenario with a company about a bill. They had said that I was late on my bill and they cut off my services and I called the bank and they said, "No, that company has stamped the check. The check's already come back through. You've paid." And so I contacted the company and this goes on and on and on, and they checked it some more and they found out, well, what happened is there are like seven numbers in my account number and I had the last two numbers reversed backwards. I think it was 31 and it was supposed to have been 13. However, I had been reversing them for months and they'd been catching it and charging it right and didn't tell me that, "Hey, we're noticing you're writing your account number down. We caught it." But that one month, they didn't catch it and they paid some other ladies' bill with my money. So I had to pay a service charge to get things hooked back up and it was a mess and God helped me. I was kind to that lady. I was sweet to that lady and I told that lady, "You know, no telling what you hear in a day's time. There's no telling the harshness and the ugliness and I appreciate you working through this with me." And you know, she called me back two days later and said, "We got some of that charge for your late fee off of your bill." And I thought, "Well, that's one time I did right." And I really do try to do that as a pattern.

I'm not telling you I'm perfect but be kind to people, especially when you're dealing with people who deal with problems with companies. I mean, this lady doesn't make the rules, she just sits there and gets berated all day long by people who are upset about things. I'm telling you, 9 times out of 10, if you'll be kind, be clear, state your position but be kind. Kind he says.

Tender-hearted there in verse 32. Be kind to one another and then tender-hearted. That means compassionate. That means especially toward those who are hurting. Then of course, and it's kind of like this keeps coming up and keeps coming up and keeps coming up, and what is that? Verse 32, "forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." You know, those who are not saved, they give themselves over to sin. Now that we're saved, do you know what we can do? We can give ourselves over to love. That's the difference. We can put on love. Others can't do that but we are enabled to do that.

Now verse 1 of chapter 5 and we're done. "Therefore be imitators of God." All of these things, no longer steal, work hard, work faithfully, purpose to be generous and help those with legitimate need, watch letting unwholesome or hurtful words come out of your mouth, and can I just add this on at this time? Oh, my goodness, be very careful with your children. Very careful with your grandchildren. Oh, never never never say, "You're worthless. You'll never come to anything." Don't do that. That's only a corrupting word. That's a rotten word. If you do that and, hey, sometimes things happen, then humble yourself and say, "Do you know what? What I said to you is wrong and it's not true. Will you forgive daddy? I shouldn't have said that." It gives you a chance to share the Gospel. Then you say, "Do you know what? Daddy needs a Savior too."

All of these things, unwholesome words, this grieving of the Holy Spirit, anger, malice, clamor, wrath, all of these things we're putting off. Why? Because we want to be, chapter 5, verse 1, "imitators of God as his beloved children." We want to be like our Father.

There was an old advertisement, I think the government put them out years ago. Do you remember, all you old people, do you remember it? Like father, like son. They'd have a father out there smoking a cigarette and the next thing you know there's a little boy on the ground, he's about four or five years old, and he's trying to get a cigarette out of his father's cigarette box. That's what Paul is saying here: be like your Father. Like father, like son. You're his sons and he is a God who is only and always truthful. He is a God who if his anger would only express righteous anger, remember we talked about that a little earlier in the text, only righteous anger? Then he works to bless others. God puts his power, now think about this, God works and God chose to put the power of the Godhead to work to save you. Doesn't he do good to others? That's the way our Father is and that's the way we want to be. He speaks only that which builds up. He doesn't speak anything to just corrupt or to be a rotten word to anyone and he's always kind, he's always tender-hearted, and he's always forgiving. So Paul ends by saying, "Be like your Daddy. Be like your Father."