

**Ephesians 4: 31 & 32; “And Be Kind to One Another”, Message # 38 in a series
entitled – “The Greatness of His Power”, a Bible Study prepared by
Pastor Paul Rendall for July 6th, 2022.**

These last two verses of chapter 4 are a continuation of Paul’s exhortation in verse 30 not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed to the day of redemption. Since the Holy Spirit is sealed to your soul after you have savingly believed in Christ, and since He beholds continually, all that is taking place in the thoughts of your mind and heart, it is not a good thing to grieve Him. Instead you must learn to respond to His pure motions and the impressions that He is making upon your heart by doing the specific things which are listed here.

1st – Putting away all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking from you. 2nd – Being kind to one another. And 3rd – Being tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. This is pretty straightforward, isn’t it? And yet we know that sometimes it is very hard for the Christian to do this. So let’s think together about these things for a few minutes, and see how we might please the Holy Spirit.

1st – It pleases the Holy Spirit when you put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking.

It is always good to attempt to define words such as we have here. The first word is “bitterness”. What is bitterness? In foods, it is a sour sharp taste in your mouth. In your heart, it is a sour difficult experience that you cannot get over; something that has made you complain against God or what someone has done to you, or said to you. It’s left a bad taste in your mouth when you speak about it. This is what you are instructed to put it away. There are a number of sins which are listed here which relate to bitterness or which may flow from it as actions which a bitter person might take or fall into. These actions themselves are sinful. Wrath, or sinful anger.

Or clamor, which means, “to speak loud words of what you will do, or what you will try to get others to do with you, against the person who you do not believe has treated you right. You are riling everyone up to do something that will not be righteous or good. Or slander. Slander is to defame a person; to try to take away their good reputation by your false words. Don’t let the bitter thoughts fester or grow in your mind and heart.

We find a warning concerning this in Hebrews chapter 12, verses 12-15. “Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.” “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”

So you can see here that bitterness in relation to what some person has said to you or what some person has done to you, can sink down a root into your heart just like a weed does in a garden, and it will attempt to choke everything that is good, and even many other people can be defiled by it. What is the remedy for this? It is to pursue peace with all men even though they are not at peace with you. It is to pursue holiness, which in this case is your committing the matter to God, casting your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you.

Let’s think about David and what he did in a situation which could have produced bitterness in him, but it did not. Psalm 55: 12-22. “For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it.” “Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from

him.” “But it was you, a man my equal, My companion and my acquaintance.” “We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng.”

“Let death seize them; let them go down alive into hell, for wickedness is in their dwelling and among them.” “As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me.” “Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He will hear my voice.” “He has redeemed by soul in peace from the battle that was against me, for there were many against me.” “God will hear and afflict them, even He who abides from of old.” “Selah.” “Because they do not change, therefore they do not fear God.”

“He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; He has broken his covenant.” “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; His words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.” “Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.” Now, from everything that is written here, I believe that David is writing about Ahithophel his trusted counselor and friend, the man who treacherously sided with his own son Absalom in his rebellion against his father, and in Absalom’s intrigues to try to obtain the kingdom for himself.

He was a man who David had taken sweet counsel together with him on many occasions. David had trusted himself to him, and did not suspect that Ahithophel would turn away his loyalty from him to Absalom. But he did, because Absalom had been skillful in winning over the hearts of many men who should have remained loyal to David. This could have produced great bitterness in David’s heart. He does pray an imprecatory prayer here against him and all those who were siding with Absalom unrighteously against him, in verse 15. But David himself was for peace, even though they were for war. David very wisely put away all malice towards these who had sinned against him. He put away all bad thoughts which would lead to wicked words and actions.

What he does say and do here is very commendable. In verse 16 he says that as for him, he would call upon God, and the Lord would save him; which was the very thing that happened. He called upon the Lord. Prayer is a good antidote for the temptation to become bitter. If you will turn with me over to 2nd Samuel 15: 29-37, you will see how David cast his burden on the Lord. When someone came and told David, saying, “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.” David said – “O Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!”

And in verse 32, it says that “when he had come to the top of the mountain, and he worshiped God – There was Hushai the Archite coming to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head.” If Ahithophel would not be faithful to David, still Hushai would be his friend through thick or thin. What an answer to prayer this was! David put off bitterness and anger and clamor and all malice. He worshiped God and prayed, and his answer came immediately in the form of help from Hushai which would defeat Ahithophel’s counsel and Absalom’s sinister plots! It always pleases the Holy Spirit when you by God’s grace are able to put away all of these sinful attitudes in your heart and actions.

2nd – It pleases the Holy Spirit when you are kind to all Christians around you.

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted...” What does it mean to be kind? In Daniel Webster’s 1828 Dictionary it defines kindness in this way: “Disposed to do good to others, and to make them happy by granting their requests, suppling their wants or assisting them in distress; having tenderness or goodness of nature; benevolent; benignant.” “Kindness proceeds from tenderness or goodness of heart; loving to be benevolent; as a kind act, a kind return of favors.” Being benevolent is defined as “having a disposition to do good; possessing love to Mankind, and a desire to promote their prosperity and happiness.” To be “benignant is to be kind and gracious and favorably disposed to others around you. We learn kindness as Christians, from God Himself.

Titus chapter 3, verses 3-8. “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.” “These things are good and profitable to men.”

So, you can see here that when we first believed in the gospel, we were being shown kindness, and in receiving grace through God’s free gift of salvation, realizing that God did not have to show us His mercy in terms of His showing us kindness and love, we then learn something very important about kindness itself. Kindness is willing to show goodness and even Christian love to unworthy people around us because we know that this is what God would want us to do, seeing as kindness and goodness are something which is essential to God in His Being. And since this is the case, we want to become more like Him.

Kindness and love are a part of the fruit of the Spirit, which He works into our hearts, and then moves in us in order that we might show kindness and love to the brethren first and then to needy and sinful people around us as well. Galatians 5: 22 and 23 – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control.” “Against such there is no law.” In other words it is always right to manifest these attitudes and actions which the Holy Spirit encourages in our hearts, by His precious and powerful working.

It is good to manifest these attitudes and actions to the brethren and it is good to manifest them toward all men that we might indeed win some to Christ. 1st Corinthians 13: 4 – “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up....” We see here that love is patient and it is kind to everyone. Look also over at Luke 6: 27 – “But I say to you who hear: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.” “To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also.” “And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.”

“Give to everyone who asks of you.” “And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.” “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.” “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?” “For even sinners love those who love them.” “And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you?” “For even sinners do the same.” “And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you?” “For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back.”

“But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High.” “For He is kind to unthankful and evil.” “Therefore be merciful, just as your Father is also merciful.” So, we see here that doing good and showing kindness flow out of the disposition to love everyone around us, even our enemies. And that disposition to think about others, to show mercy and kindness to others, is something which comes from our remembering that God is kind even to unthankful and evil men. So we must ask ourselves whether we have this holy disposition to show kindness to all people around us, and become more and more like our heavenly Father, and like Christ Himself.

3rd – The Holy Spirit is pleased when we are tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven us.

Being forgiven of all of our sins at the moment that we place our faith in Christ is the greatest gift that a sinner can ever possibly receive. To receive not only pardon for all of our sins, but also to have righteousness imputed to us makes us God's saints. Our attitude therefore concerning forgiving others for their sins against us, is a thing of great importance to God. Matthew 6: 12 – "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us) Notice the word – "as". This is something which every Christian does as a matter of course. This is because we do want all men to come to repentance and the forgiveness of their sins.

Verses 14 and 15 – "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." "But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." In other words, what you think is so serious in another person's trespassing against you, that you cannot forgive them, means that you have not thought enough about the fact that God thought your trespasses against Him and His holy law were serious enough to warrant His sending Christ to the cross so that those sins could be forgiven. And so, if you cannot see your way through to forgiving someone else their trespasses against you, God in turn will reward you accordingly by not forgiving your sins against Him or other people.

The parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18: 21-35 illustrates this truth well. I will only bring to your attention verses 32-35. "Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant!' "I forgave you all that debt because you begged me." "Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" "And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him." "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

Notice the word "pity" in verse 33. Does God really pity lost sinners enough to have pity on them so as to save them from the great debt which they owe Him which they cannot pay back? Then you and I who have been forgiven such a debt ought also to show to those who have sinned against us, trespassed against us, such pity, or mercy as it is worded in some translations. To the merciful God will show mercy. Notice also that the master was angry over the servant's unwillingness to forgive his fellow servant. He delivered him over to the torturers.

What does this mean? Well, if a person really has received forgiveness of sins from God, then it cannot mean that he will ever perish over an incident like this. But if a Christian will not forgive some other brother or sister for their sins, their trespasses against himself, God will not give them peace over this issue until they do. And if they are stubborn about it, the Lord will reveal this to them, and will continue to confront them in their conscience about it, until the forgiveness is granted by them. It will be like torturers working on him until he comes to the place where he can freely forgive them.

Of course, it would be possible for a person to think that they are a Christian and yet not ever forgive that person who has trespassed against them. In that case, they will perish in their sins, not being able to pay the debt that they owe to God, which God will leave them to try to pay throughout all of eternity. But the greatness of the debt will be too great to pay and thus the punishment will be eternal for those who do not forgive their brother from their heart. This is the importance of the passage that we are studying, that we keep short accounts with God and that we will forgive our brother from our heart, as our Lord has said.