

ROCK GROUP BIBLE STUDY

May 23, 2003

Characteristics of the Righteous Walk [Part 6]

Ephesians 4:25-32

25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one [of you] with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. 26 Be angry, and [yet] do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity. 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.

Remember that verse 25 begins with the term *therefore*. When you see a *therefore* in Scripture, you have to see what it is there for. In this particular case it is looking back to the previous verses, in particular verses 22-24. It is referring to the laying aside of the old self and the putting on of the new self. Since the old self has been stripped off as a filthy garment is stripped off and a new self has been put on; since the old nature has been removed and they have been given a new nature, then they are to respond differently than before. They are to respond by walking in righteousness and holiness in truth (cf. Ephesians 4:17-24). Their life should be characterized by the characteristics that follow in verses 25-32.

- ***What are the characteristics of the righteous walk that Paul highlights in Ephesians 4:25-32?***

Vs. 25, **Lay aside falsehood and speak truth.**

Vs. 26-27, **Never stop being angry with your sin.**

Vs. 28, **No longer steal, but work and share.**

Vs. 29, **No unwholesome words, but words of edification.**

Vs. 30, **Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.**

Vs. 31-32, **Put away bitterness, wrath, anger and clamor and be kind, tender-hearted and forgiving to one another; Moving from malice to mercy.**

Verses 31-32

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.

Once again Paul informs the Ephesian believers by way of command that their behavior must change. He gives a list of characteristics that they are to do away with in verse 31. The verb *put*

away in verse 31 is a strong one that essentially means, "to get rid of!" It emphasizes the strong effort needed in order to get rid of the internal conditions that produce the external actions.

- **According to verse 31, what characteristics are not becoming of a believer in Christ who is striving to walk in righteousness?**

1. Bitterness; 2) Wrath; 3) Anger; 4) Clamor; 5) Slander; and 6) Malice.

Notice the term *all* in verse 31. It carries the force of "*all manner of*," and thus emphasizes that there is not to be a shred of any one of these characteristics evidenced in our lives as believers. Lets take a moment to examine each of these characteristics.

- **What is bitterness? Give an example.**

This word in the English typically means a state of extreme resentment. The Greek term [PIKRIA] portrays an ill-tempered, fretted, irritable state of mind that keeps a person in a state of perpetual animosity and resentment. It is a disposition of bitterness, of the spirit that refuses to be reconciled, and is characterized by harshness in speech or feeling. It reflects a smoldering resentment and a brooding grudge-filled attitude. (i.e. 1 Corinthians 13:5)

- **What do the following verses teach us about bitterness?**

Acts 8:23

Romans 3:14 (note its context)

Hebrews 12:15

- **What is the difference between wrath and anger?**

The term wrath [THUMOS] (or rage) is only used here in Ephesians and is a turbulent, explosive anger that bursts into expression. It is a passionate outburst that may be more spontaneous. It is a boiling agitation often accompanied with the desire to harm or inflict pain.

The term anger [ORGEI] is a settled disposition of anger, which is considerably more under control yet also more permanent. It is a settled attitude of the mind and may plot revenge and be more long lasting and deep-seated than wrath.

- **What is clamor?**

Webster—a loud outcry; to make a loud outcry such as in demanding or complaining.

The noun, *clamor* means, "the cries of passion against another." It is an outcry of strife, reproach, scorn or scolding. The picture is mostly external, referring to the uncontrolled casting about of words. The sense is that of reviling another by an undermining of evil surmise and slander.

- **What is slander?**

Webster—maliciously untrue statements about someone.

The term slander is the Greek word, [BLASPHEIMIA], which is where we get the English term, Blasphemy. This word communicates the idea of slanderous or injurious speech to others in a direct manner. Its design is to hurt and defame the reputation of others. It is distinct from the previous

term in that it is a reviling of others without an attempt to hide it. It includes the idea of lying about someone so as to damage their reputation.

- ***What is malice?***

The term emphasizes an evil-intention or **ill-will**. It is an active desire to do harm to others. Malice is doing evil despite the good that has been received. It can mean anything from trouble to wickedness and is a deliberate attempt to harm another person.

This sequence of negative terms is built on a distinct progression. Bitterness is the virulent, harsh state of mind that settles in one's mind. As a result of this attitude a boiling rage breaks out and eventually settles into an abiding anger. Up to this point the progression is primarily internal, but if such attitudes are tolerated then they develop into external manifestations such as clamor, slander and malice.

These are the sins that break fellowship and destroy relationships, that weaken the church and mar its testimony before the world. When an unbeliever sees Christians acting just like the rest of society, the church is blemished in his eyes and he is confirmed still further in resisting the claims of the gospel.—John MacArthur

These are the characteristics that the believer must get rid of. These are characteristics of the unrighteous rather than the righteous. These are characteristics of the old nature rather than the new nature. These are characteristics that must be replaced with the characteristics of the new nature.

- ***According to verse 32, what is Paul's prescription? What positive characteristics should replace the negative ones previously mentioned?***

1. **Be Kind!; 2) Be Tender-hearted & 3) Be forgiving to each other!**

Verse 32 is once again an imperative command. These are the appropriate actions of the believer. The word "*Be Kind*" simply means to be kind or benignant. It is used of God in Luke 6:35 and Romans 2:4. It represents the disposition of mind which thinks of its neighbor's affairs as much as its own. Kindness is a characteristic of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4. Kindness is listed as part of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. Kindness should characterize our life rather than bitterness.

Hippocrates used the word translated here as *tender-hearted* of "healthy bowels" and "firmness of heart." Its best rendering is tender-hearted, emphasizing a tremendous depth of compassion. In fact the NIV translates it as *compassionate*. "It reflects a feeling deep in the bowels, or stomach, a gnawing psychosomatic paid due to empathy for someone's need."—John MacArthur.

Lastly, the Christian should be characterized by forgiveness. Here is speaks of our attitude of love toward one another. Forgiveness is fundamental to all healthy relationships.

The most graphic illustration of forgiveness is given in the parable of Matthew 18:21-35. When Peter asked about the limits of forgiveness, the Lord told him a story of a man with an un-payable debt who was forgiven by his creditor, the king. This was clearly a picture of salvation—God forgiving a sinner the un-payable debt of unrighteous rebellion against Him. (cf. MacArthur, p. 190)

- *Are we commanded to forgive?*
- *Are some acts too significant to be forgiven?*
- *If we forgive, are we excusing behavior?*
- *Why are we to forgive?*