

TEN EXHORTATIONS, PT. 3; EPH. 4:31 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

THIS MORNING, ~ WE CONTINUE OUR LOOK AT PAUL'S TEN EXHORTATIONS IN THIS next section, ~ Eph. 4:25 – 5:2.

TODAY, ~ WE'LL FOCUS SOLELY ON VERSE 31.

IN THIS VERSE, ~ WE FIND THE SIXTH EXHORTATION THAT HELPS SPELL OUT IN detail the type of life that should result from the truth of chapters 1-3, ~ ¶¶

AND THAT SERVES AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO PUT OFF OUR OLD SELF and to put on our new self.

▶▶ The exhortation is to get rid of six sinful practices from our lives. ~~ "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."

▶▶ Again, ~ the English word "Let" is required for a literal translation. ~~ Greek: ~ command.

▷▷ So we could read it this way: ~~ "All bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander must be put away from you, along with all malice."

▷▷ Or, ~ "I command you to banish all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander from your lives, along with all malice."

▷▷ So to get rid of these six sinful practices from our lives, ~ my brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ is not something optional, ~ something to do only if we feel like it.

↪↪ We must banish these six sinful practices from our lives.

THE FIRST SINFUL PRACTICE LISTED IN VERSE 31 THAT WE ARE TO BANISH FROM our lives is "bitterness."

▶▶ "bitterness" in the NT focuses on that angry and resentful state of mind that can develop when we undergo adverse circumstances or when we think we've been mistreated.

▷▷ It includes within it animosity and harshness.

▶▶ Perhaps we can see this focus in the words that the NT associates with bitterness.

▷▷ In Col. 3:19 it is contrasted with love and suggests harsh treatment. ~~ "Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them." ¶¶ 1/8

▷▷ In Rom. 3:14 bitterness is linked with cursing.

↳↳ "Their ~ [i.e., ~ unbelievers] ~ mouth is full of curses and bitterness."

▷▷ And James 3:14 ties bitterness to jealousy.

↳↳ "But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth."

▶▶ The developed portrait in the NT reveals bitterness to be an angry, ~ hostile outlook on life, ~ an outlook expressed in resentment and in attacks on others.

▶▶ If we dwell in bitterness long enough, ~ it produces a wounded spirit and a hard heart.

▶▶ We must understand my brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ we might be able to nurse a sick person back to health.

▷▷ But no matter how long we nurse a grudge, ~ it won't get better.

▶▶ Heb. 12:15b sounds a warning. ~ "See to it . . . that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled."

▷▷ Bitterness does not just affect the person who is bitter. ~ Like a bad disease, ~ it can spread to others.

▷▷ The bitter person causes trouble in the local fellowship ~ and many other believers are affected negatively.

→→ In short, ~ a bitter person will wreak havoc in the church.

▶▶ And we are told to do the opposite.

▷▷ Ps. 34:14, ~ "Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it."

↳↳ David calls upon us to turn our backs on evil. ~ Instead do good, ~ he says. ~ I.e., ~ do things that cause good for people.

↳↳ He exhorts us to do our best to have a harmonious relationship with others. ~ He says to "pursue it," ~ i.e., ~ peace.

→→ This could be paraphrased as "pursue peace with all your heart." ~ David's point here is for us to go all out in order to maintain and promote peace. ↴ 2/8

▷▷ And in Rom. 14:19, ~ Paul writes, ~ NIV ~ "So let's strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up."

↳↳ Paul's point? ~ Try as hard as we can to do what will bring peace and strengthen our fellow believers spiritually.

▶▶ "bitterness" does not maintain and promote harmonious relationships. ~ It's not something that brings peace. ~ It does not build others up.

↳↳ Therefore, ~ "bitterness" must be banished from our lives.

THE SECOND SINFUL PRACTICE LISTED IN VERSE 31 THAT WE ARE TO BANISH FROM our lives is "wrath."

▶▶ "wrath" refers to hot-tempered anger that explodes under the slightest provocation.

▶▶ Prov. 14:17a says, ~ "A man of quick temper acts foolishly."

▷▷ Flying off the handle," ~ not controlling one's temper, ~ causes a person to do and say ridiculous things, ~ which they may later regret and be unable to undo.

▶▶ And notice what Prov. 29:22b says. ~ NASB, ~ "And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression."

▷▷ So we see that an abundance of sin accompanies being hot-tempered.

▶▶ In contrast, ~ Prov. 14:29a says, ~ "Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding."

▷▷ "great understanding" means to "have good sense," ~ "be very wise," ~ "show great intelligence or insight."

↳↳ I.e., ~ "Whoever is slow to anger has good sense, ~ is very wise, ~ shows great intelligence or insight."

▶▶ Also in contrast to the quick-tempered person, ~ Prov. 16:32 says, ~ "Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city."

▷▷ Briefly put, ~ the point of the first line is that society at large is better served by one patient man who, ~ consistently, ~ is slow to provocation ~ ¶¶

↳↳ than it is by a great military hero who, ~ in the flash of a moment, ~ achieves some great victory. ¶¶ 3/8

▷▷ In the second line, ~ "rules his spirit" means that the person is in control of his or her emotional state.

↳↳ And the point is that such a one is to be preferred to the valiant man who can take on a whole city and win.

▶▶ And Prov. 19:11 says, ~ "Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense."

▷▷ I.e., ~ Sensible people control their temper. ~ They earn respect by overlooking wrongs done to them.

▷▷ Of course, ~ this does not necessarily mean that a person does not get angry.

↳↳ Rather, ~ it means that he conceals that anger well ~ and responds calmly ~ until he can process the wrong that has been done to him.

▶▶ Furthermore, ~ James exhorts us in James 1:19b, ~ NIV ~ "Everyone should be quick to listen, ~ slow to speak ~ and slow to become angry."

▷▷ Far too often I do the opposite: ~ I'm quick to become angry, ~ quick to speak, ~ and deaf in both ears.

▶▶ This ability to be slow to anger is so valuable ~ because it is a reflection of God's own nature.

▷▷ Ps. 145:8, ~ "The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

▶▶ Prov. 22:24-25 (NIV) sounds a warning.

▷▷ "Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, ~ [why:] ~ or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared."

↳↳ This proverb warns us not to associate with such a person because we are liable to develop a similar problem with anger.

→→ Hot-tempered people lead others to become hot-tempered people.

▷▷ Here we are reminded of what Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:33, ~ "Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals ~ [i.e., ~ ruins good character]."

↳↳ Not other way around. ~ So Solomon warns us ↯ 4/8

▶▶ Back in Eph. 4:26a, ~ Paul was talking about appropriate anger, ~ when he said "Be angry and do not sin," ~ i.e., ~ controlled anger that subsides quickly and does not lead us into sin.

▷▷ Obviously, ~ "wrath" here in verse 31 does not fit that category.

↳↳ "wrath," ~ i.e., ~ hot-tempered anger that explodes under the slightest provocation, ~ is anger that controls us and leads us into sin.

→→ Therefore, ~ hot-tempered anger that explodes under the slightest provocation must be banished from our lives.

THE THIRD SINFUL PRACTICE LISTED IN VERSE 31 THAT WE ARE TO BANISH FROM our lives is "anger."

▶▶ This is the opposite of the anger of verse 26a, ~ which again is controlled anger that is short lived and does not lead us into sin.

▶▶ The Greeks described the anger here in verse 31 as anger which had become habitual.

▷▷ I.e., ~ long-lived anger, ~ a settled condition of the heart.

▷▷ "anger" here in verse 31 points to a person who is angry all of the time.

↳↳ They get up angry, ~ they shower angry, ~ they eat breakfast angry, ~ they go to work angry, ~ ¶¶

→→ they come home angry, ~ they watch TV angry, ~ and they go to bed angry.

▶▶ Prov. 29:22a warns us about people who are angry all the time.

▷▷ NIV, ~ "An angry person ~ [i.e., ~ a person who is angry all the time] ~ stirs up conflict."

▷▷ I.e., ~ They provoke all kinds of trouble and quarrels wherever they go.

↳↳ So we see the danger to the harmony and unity of the church that a person who is always angry poses.

→→ Therefore, ~ this type of anger must be banished from our lives.

THE FOURTH SINFUL PRACTICE LISTED IN VERSE 31 THAT WE ARE TO BANISH FROM our lives is "clamor." ¶¶ 5/8

▶▶ "clamor" can also be translated as "shouting" or "screaming." ~~ The term was used of people shouting back and forth in a quarrel.

▶▶ Prov. 15:1 says, ~ NASB, ~ "A gentle answer turns away wrath, ~ But a harsh word stirs up anger."

▷▷ I.e., ~ "A gentle answer turns away anger at its hottest. ~~ But a harsh word makes tempers flare."

▷▷ Our speech has the potential to quiet a riot ~ or to fan the embers of anger.

▷▷ The word "gentle" means soft, ~ tender, ~ or delicate.

↳↳ Here the idea is probably that of a conciliatory tone.

→→ We should be "gentle" in tone of voice, ~ terms chosen, ~ and non-verbal communications that accompany our speech.

▷▷ Unguarded words escalate any ill will that may be already present.

↳↳ A "harsh word" is not simply one spoken with abrasiveness or out of irritation, ~ but it is one designed to wound the other person.

▷▷ So we see that a gentle answer may quench even white-hot anger, ~ while a single poorly timed word may fan a little huff into a raging fire.

▶▶ And Prov. 25:15 says, ~ "With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue ~ [i.e., ~ soft speech] ~ will break a bone."

▷▷ The bones are the most rigid body parts inside of a person, ~ and fracturing the bones here refers to breaking down the deepest, ~ most hardened resistance to an idea a person may possess.

↳↳ IOW, ~ gentle speech, ~ as opposed to shouting or screaming, ~ is very powerful.

→→ Solomon is saying that gentle speech can break down the deepest, ~ most hardened resistance to an idea a person may possess.

▶▶ Just think how many quarrels could be avoided if we didn't raise our voices, ~ refrained from harsh words, ~ and responded with "soft speech" and a "gentle answer."

▷▷ Therefore, ~ "clamor" must be banished from our lives. ↯↯ 6/8

THE FIFTH SINFUL PRACTICE LISTED IN VERSE 31 THAT WE ARE TO BANISH FROM our lives is "slander."

▶▶ "slander" means to speak against someone in such a way as to injure their reputation.

▷▷ We can slander with our words, ~ a lifted eyebrow, ~ an unfinished sentence, ~ a rhetorical question left dangling in the air.

▷▷ We can slander through insults, ~ ridicule, ~ cruel jokes, ~ rumors, ~ belittling, ~ gossip, ~ or by passing unfair and hasty judgment.

▷▷ And be careful. ~~ Slander can even act under the guise of a prayer request.

↳↳ It goes something like this, ~ "I mention this only for prayer, ~ but did you know that he/she . . ." and then the person's character is assassinated.

▶▶ Prov. 16:28b warns "a whisperer separates close friends."

▷▷ The whispering is behind someone's back, ~ spoken in soft tones. ~~ "Did you hear about . . . ?"

↳↳ Such gossip "separates close friends."

→→ Slander soon drives a wedge where no wedge should ever be allowed to enter.

▶▶ And Prov. 20:19 warns, ~ NASB ~ "He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a gossip."

▷▷ Slanderers take what has been shared in confidence and use it to their own advantage and to the other person's disadvantage.

↳↳ What was shared in an intimate, ~ personal moment is now broadcast publicly.

▷▷ We are told "do not associate with" such a person. ~~ The less contact we have with a loose-lipped person, ~ the better off we are.

↳↳ It is tempting to listen to their latest news. ~~ But, ~ even if their intent is not malicious, ~ they cannot be trusted with confidential information.

▶▶ I think we can all pretty much guess what the devastating consequences are that slander can bring about in our church if we don't banish it from our lives.

▷▷ Therefore, ~ "slander" must be banished from our lives. 🚫 7/8

THE SIXTH SINFUL PRACTICE LISTED IN VERSE 31 THAT WE ARE TO BANISH FROM our lives is "malice."

▶▶ "malice" covers any desire or action intended to inflict pain, ~ harm, ~ or injury on another believer. ~ It includes the holding of grudges and acting out of these grudges against other believers.

▶▶ "malice" and "slander" are included in a list of sinful practices that Peter tells us to banish from our lives in 1 Pet. 2:1.

▷▷ "So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander."

↳↳ The verb translated as "put away" was used of removing old clothing.

→→ And in this sense it means to shed "malice" and "slander," ~ and these other sinful practices, ~ as one removes old or dirty clothing.

↳↳ This verb was also used of washing dirt from the body.

→→ So in this sense it can mean to cleanse oneself of "malice" and "slander," ~ and these other sinful practices, ~ as one washes away dirt or filth.

▶▶ "malice," ~ i.e., ~ any desire or action intended to inflict pain, ~ harm, ~ or injury on another believer, ~ holding grudges and acting out of these grudges against other believers, ~ will destroy people and the harmony and unity of a church.

▷▷ Therefore, ~ "malice" must be banished from our lives.

CONCLUSION.

THESE SIX SINFUL PRACTICES BELONG TO THE PERSON WE USED TO BE BEFORE salvation ~ and to "the domain of darkness" from which we've been forever rescued.

▶▶ My . . . ~ these six sinful practices have no place in the kingdom into which we have been forever transferred, ~ i.e., ~ the kingdom of God's beloved Son.

▶▶ Recall, ~ back in Eph. 4:22a, ~ Paul said that believers are taught to stop being the person we were ~ and to stop doing the things we did ~ before we came to Jesus for salvation.

▷▷ So, ~ along with the old life, ~ all bitterness, ~ wrath, ~ anger, ~ clamor, ~ slander, ~ and malice must go.

LET'S PRAY ~ 8/8