

## SERMON NOTES

## EPHESIANS 4:31,32

### ANGER, FORGIVENESS AND THE CROSS

#### INTRODUCTION

When I first read this passage in order to prepare this message, I thought “Verse 31 reminds me of one of the factories in which I once worked: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, slander and malice.” Then it struck me Paul is not talking about a postmodern, pagan workplace; he is talking about a church. He is saying churches and church people are not to be like this. But the church in Ephesus *was* like this. If it were not, he would not have told them to stop being like this, he would not have instructed them to put these things away.

#### LET GO OF ALL ANGER (verse 31)

Paul instructs us to have done with six things: bitterness, anger and wrath, clamour, slander and malice. There is a downward progression here from undesirable emotions to ungodly actions. The six things are:

1. Bitterness. This means to be resentful, envious or jealous. It involves a nursing of hatred.
2. & 3. Wrath and anger. These two are very similar and listed together like this serves to intensify them. When bitterness is not dealt with it festers into wrath and anger.
4. Clamour. This is another step downwards. Bitterness allowed to fester produces wrath and anger. Wrath and anger allowed to fester results in clamour, or literally, shouting, screaming and cursing.
5. Slander. If clamour is allowed to develop it produces slander. This is personal defamation, either by lies or gossip.
6. Malice. This simply means evil. Paul uses the term *all malice* to sum up the five destructive attitudes and behaviours he has just mentioned and to allow for any he has not listed.

#### BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER (verse 32a)

Not only are we to put away evil; positively we are to be *kind, tenderhearted and forgiving to one another*. As Martyn Lloyd Jones points out, “The way to get rid of the defects is to cultivate the virtues.”

Let us look at these three terms:

1. Be kind. Kindness is love in action.
2. Tenderhearted. This term further explains kindness. If the unregenerate person has “an hardness of heart”, or a “calloused heart” the Christian is have a tender heart.
3. Forgiving. To forgive is literally ‘to act in grace towards one another.’

#### FORGIVE AS CHRIST FORGAVE YOU (verse 32b)

Our motivation in forgiving others is not just that it make us feel better, though it will, nor just that it will please God, though it will, we are to forgive because we ourselves have been forgiven. Martyn Lloyd Jones said, “It is only the Christian that do this, for he has been able to look at the offender now with a new eye. Before, he saw him as a victim of sin, a pawn and a dupe of the devil; now he says, Yes, he is like that and I was like that, and there are still relics and remnants of that in me still; who am I to say I will not forgive that man?”