



CAPITOL
ministries®

OCTOBER 2, 2023

PUBLIC SERVANT
ENDORSEMENT 2

James Lankford
U.S. Senator, Oklahoma

VERSE OF THE WEEK 3

Ephesians 4:31–32

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Slaying the Sin of Slander



“Calumny of Apelles,” Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510), Uffizi.
See note on page 8.

American elections are way too nasty. Political ads and campaign speeches are filled with attacks, condemnations, criticisms, verbal assaults, unproven accusations, and even false charges that candidates from all major political parties—including incumbents—lob at each other. Our Constitution guarantees us free speech, but that right should never be taken as a license to slander. Like falsely yelling “Fire!” in a crowded theater, slander is not protected free speech.

We now live in a highly loquacious, instantaneous, intractable mediated culture, and a cowboy named Steroidal Slander is on the loose. When the character of another is involved, he’s quick on the draw.

What’s the remedy? For one, someone needs to model a higher standard! And of all people, those who name the name of Christ who hold public office, ought to be the ones who model that higher standard! Christ must make a difference in this area of the life of the believer. Ephesians 4:31 states, *Let all ... slander be put away from you.* This passage is our study

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- CURRENT AND FORMER GOVERNORS
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 - Mike Dunleavy AK
 - Greg Gianforte MT
 - Sarah Huckabee Sanders AR
 - Sonny Perdue GA
 - Rick Perry TX
 - Jim Pillen NE
 - Tate Reeves MS
 - Kim Reynolds IA
 - Kevin Stitt OK
 - Scott Walker WI
 - Glenn Youngkin VA

- SENATORS
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 - Mike Braun IN
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 - Joe Wilson SC
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 - Steve Womack AR
 - Rudy Yakym IN
 - Ted Yoho FL

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

- Governors: Fridays 9am (EST), Zoom
- Former Cabinet Members / White House Senior Staff: Fridays 9am (EST), Zoom
- Senate Members: Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served
- House Members: Thursdays 8am, AG Hearing Rm., Longworth 1302, hot breakfast served

The views expressed in each Bible Study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study sponsor.



PUBLIC SERVANT QUOTE

James Lankford
U.S. Senator, Oklahoma



“The First Amendment [of the U.S. Constitution] reads: ‘Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.’

“In the words of founder James Madison, religious opinions are a ‘property of particular value.’ Our nation respects the right of everyone to have a faith, live that faith, change their faith, or have no faith at all.

“As a Christian, my faith isn’t just a hobby I practice on weekends. My faith impacts my daily life whether I’m in Washington, D.C., or my back yard.

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for this week; I’m hoping as we better understand what putting away slander means, we can holster our guns. Read on, my friend!

Ralph Drollinger

I. INTRODUCTION

This week I would like to examine Ephesians 4:31–32. This summary passage relates to the practical aspects of being saved and called in Christ (which in Chapter 1 represents the crux of the Epistle). At the start of chapter 4, Paul begins the practical portion of his epistle by saying that in order to *walk in a manner worthy of the calling* in Christ (4:1) believers must demonstrate *all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance* (4:2).

These words must describe the Spirit-filled believer (cf. 5:18) in general, and by way of application in D.C., they must characterize those whom He assigns to public office so that they may be effective ambassadors for Christ in His institution of civil government. In this vein of thinking, it follows that Paul would later address the elements of an opposite spirit—and he does by the end of the chapter under study this week. In our above home passage, he arrests the manifestations of a contrary spirit and then in summary comes full circle. Note the simple contrast of the passage with this context in mind.

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:31–32).

Such makes for your good witness for Christ while in public office to a populace dead in their sins (cf. Ephesians 2:1). Herein is biblical instruction to the micro and macro attitude every true believer and community of believers must possess if we are to be good witnesses. This week let’s examine each of the above specific characteristics in detail to gain a better understanding of what the Bible means by what it says. Learning and demonstrating who we already are in Christ is essential to spiritual growth.

II. CHARACTERISTICS TO PUT AWAY

In writing this passage, the apostle Paul is not as interested in the objective of reformed and refined moral conduct (although that is in view) as he is in providing a Spirit-led list of indicators that reflect the characteristic elements of the believer’s present new life in Christ. The positive elements of these attitudes and actions are incumbent in a life indwelt by God!

The intent of all apostolic instruction is not to moralize us in a heavy-handed legalistic sense, but to illuminate what will always be attributes of true and genuine regeneration!

What follows in the first portion of this passage are the habits of the old, pre-



Christian, unregenerate man—the believer’s former self that need to be *put away*.

A. BITTERNESS

The Greek word for the noun *bitterness* is *pikria*. It denotes the emotional status of a person who can’t get over the pains associated with past disappointments. All who are unregenerate, and some of those who are regenerate—some believers—can find themselves struggling with *bitterness*. Characteristic of fallen human nature is a desire to some degree to nurse past injustices and dwell on them. One of the compulsory features of man’s fallenness is the deliberate bringing up and rehearsing of hurts, hurts that are sometimes real, or sometimes imagined and/or speculative. States one commentator:

Bitterness is a state of the spirit. It denotes a sort of persistent sourness and an absence of amiability. It is an unloving condition. Indeed, it is a condition which never sees any good in anything, but always contrives to see something wrong, or some defect or deficiency ... because the person himself is jaundiced and bitter, everything he looks at is tinged by the same thing; it is looking through coloured spectacles.¹

Paul states herein that believers should *let all bitterness* (along with the four other descriptors that follow) *be put away from you*. *Put away* (*airo*) in Greek means, “to raise, take up, lift.” Paul is saying when we become followers of Christ, God gives us the power to rise above being *bitter* all the time! Rather than dwelling on *bitterness*,

The believer is to form new habits of mental discipline. Simultaneously, the Holy

Spirit appropriates and empowers the believer to forgive and forget!

The opposite of *bitterness* is *forgiveness*—the new, indwelling Holy Spirit characteristic nature of someone who has been called by Christ! The apostle Paul personally illustrates his own victorious living patterns in this regard when he says, *forgetting what lies behind* (Philippians 3:13). You may have heard the saying that holding a grudge over a past injustice is letting the devil live rent-free in your heart. Paul didn’t do that, nor should you. In contrast, Paul states in Philippians 4:8:

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

Believers are not to be cynical spoilsports who continually dwell on defects in others as a way of life. Rather, forthrightly and clearly, believers are *commanded* here to *put away all bitterness!* It follows that to refuse to put away *all* bitterness is to be disobedient to God’s clear instruction in and for your life; it is a desire to supersede what God’s Word says about how you ought to live your life for your own good and instead wallow in sin! In a practical sense, your obedience to *put away* your past will lead today to a genuinely better life! *Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead!* The past is finite; the future is infinite! Spend your energies on things that will benefit you!

In relation to the sovereignty of God and the foreordination of the believer, Christians have no basis for being bitter at any time.

VERSE OF THE WEEK



Ephesians 4:31–32

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.



Be a good witness for Christ!





Continued from page 2

“Elected officials have the same right as every other American: to have a faith and live their faith. I cannot and should not impose my faith on others, but neither can others impose their faith or lack of faith on me.

“We should be neutral to faith.

“In America, we have the free exercise of religion. You can choose any faith or no faith and still be a great American.

“You don’t have to choose between your faith and serving in public office or partnering with your government to serve your community.

“You can literally have your faith and live it too.”

These excerpts were taken from Senator James Lankford: “Our American experiment of religious liberty—you can have your faith and live it, too,” Fox News Opinion, published Feb. 28, 2021.

It is only by allowing the above theology to inform your thinking that you will find victory over bitterness, my friend. Consider this Old Testament (OT) biblical illustration regarding good theology informing your thinking and emotions: Joseph had concluded in his mind after his brothers had thrown him in a pit and left him to die, that, “*As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive*” (Genesis 50:20). Wow! Joseph inculcated theology—he was a doer of the Word, not merely a hearer (cf. James 1:22–25). The Word informed and governed his life and emotions! Now that’s spiritual maturity.

B. ANGER AND WRATH

These two words are often used together in Scripture, as is the case in this parallel passage, Colossians 3:8: *But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath* The Greek words for *anger* and *wrath* are *orge* and *thumos*, respectively. Whereas the former has to do with an internal smoldering and deep-seated negative emotion with an aim to exact punishment and get even, the latter relates to wild rage and passion for the moment. *Wrath* in this context is the acting out on inner *anger*. It is a common unregenerate person’s response to injustice (and unfortunately of many others who name the name of Christ).

Further, note that in Titus 1:7 the same root word for *anger* appears: *orgilos*. In this context, Paul is saying to pastor Titus that a believer who is still *quick-tempered*, is characteristic of spiritual immaturity and this keeps him (per the context of the passage) from being qualified to lead in the Church. Note in furthering our word study, Galatians 5:20: *wrath* (*thumos*) is used in conjunction with the Greek word translated “jealous.” Togeth-

er they connote the idea of a strong, manifest selfish desire. In other words, the Bible teaches

People who get easily upset are self-centered people.

Conversely, when believers understand theologically that they have been *crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I* [they] *who live, but Christ lives in* [them] ... (Galatians 2:20), they possess no biblically legitimate reason to harbor *anger* nor jealousy and react violently every time someone hurts them! Why? Because *they are already dead to self anyway!* For them to live is Christ! Theology informs and governs the thinking and emotions of the spiritually mature. Theology trains them over time.

C. CLAMOR

When *bitterness*, *wrath*, and *anger* exist inside the heart of a person, it will inevitably come out in his speech. *Clamor* (*krauge*) denotes such resulting verbal enunciations: *clamor*, also translated as *brawling* in other English Bible translations, denotes shouting and violence. The Greek word is *onomatopoeic*, (änää, matää'pē-ik)² in the sense that speaking the word sounds like the crowing of a raven. It is used in Acts 23:9, *And there occurred a great uproar* [*krauge*]; *and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and began to argue heatedly.* The Pharisees were crowing! *Clamorous* speech then, is when people raise their voices and are out of control.

No believing public servant should be characterized by crowing speech in front of the camera, in their district, on the floor, in his or her office, or at home.



To do that is to deny your new identity in Christ! Conversely, one of the fruits of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the life of the regenerate is *self-control* (Galatians 5:22–24). As a believer, you are empowered and enabled from and by your Heavenly Father to manifest restraint in your speech. By way of your new nature in Christ you are an apt ambassador, not a *clamoring* crowd. Scripture must not only be informative but must be the final arbiter of a public servant's acceptable style.

D. SLANDER

Next in his collage of terms depicting the speech of the unregenerate old nature of man, Paul instructs the Ephesian believers to *put away slander* (*blasphemia*) which is included in the title of this Bible study for apt reasons. This is a compound Greek word consisting of: *blapto* meaning, “to injure,” and *pheme* meaning “to speak” i.e., “injurious speech.” *Slander* is “the action or crime of making a false spoken statement damaging to a person’s reputation.”³ It is also translated as “railing.” All are English synonyms. To *slander* is to defame someone; it is evil speech that arises out of a *bitter* heart. States Luke 6:45 regarding this progression:

The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

Slander is the attempted cool and calculated form of self-centered communication with the evil intent to build oneself up by putting down another.

But *slander*, as heard by anyone worth influencing, one who is discerning and mature, hurts the purveyor in a much greater

way because the wise man can see through the slandering man. Don’t be a part of the *slanderos* cowboy culture of the Capitol. Put away your misaimed guns:

Slander is rampant in the public servant industry. Not only via the whisper campaigns, hit mail during elections, clandestine blackballing, or all-out assaults on camera by colleagues, but by the media itself. Scripture labels it all as sin.

Let me be clear: *slander* is a political tool and worldly technique that is off-limits to the believer. Whereas *slander* is common fare in the world, it can damage the body of Christ and its witness when resorted to by believers. God will not bless you like he did Joseph if you don’t respond like Joseph. Remember,

Joseph went from sure death in a ditch to the commander in a kingdom!

How did he do that? He didn’t; God did it! Why? Because in part, Joseph did not seek his own revenge which includes verbal vengeance (cf. Romans 12:18–21).

E. MALICE

As if the aforementioned is not enough, the apostle adds *malice* (*kakia*) to his list of facets. It means “ill will.” *Kakia* is an all-encompassing word denoting evil in the New Testament (NT). It is used therein fifty times. States Bible commentator Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

Malice means wicked desires with respect to others, a determination to harm others, again a kind of set-

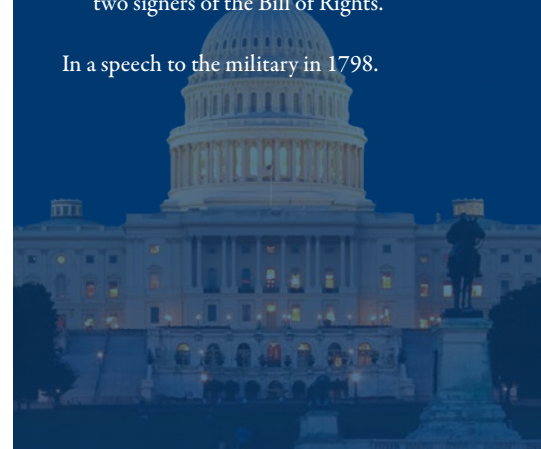
John Adams



“We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

— John Adams, second President of the United States, signer of the Declaration of Independence, judge, diplomat, one of two signers of the Bill of Rights.

In a speech to the military in 1798.





Benjamin Franklin



“Without Freedom of Thought, there can be no such thing as Wisdom; and no such thing as public liberty, without Freedom of Speech.”

— Benjamin Franklin, signer of the Declaration of Independence, diplomat, printer, scientist, signer of the Constitution, governor of Pennsylvania.

Benjamin Franklin, “Letter from Silence Dogood,” printed in *The New England Courant*, July 9, 1722



ted spirit which so hates others that it thinks of ways of harming them, plots such ways, gloats over them, and then proceeds to put them into practice; it is a kind of malignity.⁴

A biblical understanding of the Greek word for *malice* parallels the English definition: “intention or desire to harm another usually seriously through doing something unlawful or otherwise unjustified willfulness in the commission of a wrong: evil intention.”⁵

Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander and *malice* are all characteristics of those who are *dead in ... trespasses and sin* (Ephesians 2:1) and are to be *put away* from the practice of believers. People in the Capitol will know you are a Christian because of your attitude and resolve to never resort to such oral and behavioral patterns. It follows that those who continually, habitually practice the above are not believers, no matter what they personally profess. Fortunately, Paul now goes on to explain what the believer should *put on* in replacement.

III. CHARACTERISTICS TO PUT ON

In continuation, but now in contrast, Paul lists three things that a Christian should be defined by. Notice that he does not leave us with a list of negative commandments, but rather a set of positive replacements. Thomas Chalmers called this, “the expulsive power of a new affection.” I really like that! Here’s a good illustration of that concept: i.e., putting on in order to *put away*.

Lesson from a Red Oak Tree

The way in which the dead leaves of winter are removed from a red oak is

not through tedious plucking, but by the power of the spring buds; the new shoot replaces the old. So it is with new life in Christ. As you concentrate your energies on putting on what follows, the old nature will pass from sight by itself over time. For more information on progressive sanctification, see my study, “How to Effect Change and Growth in Your Life.” The blossoming characteristics of new life in Christ include the following.

A. KINDNESS

What is *kindness*? In the original Greek and Hebrew it meant, “To be useful, to be helpful.” In contrast to *bitterness*, which takes from and detracts, *kindness* is to give and be of value. Whereas *bitterness* is on a mission to find fault, *kindness* is forbearing and seeks to give praise. *Kindness* is characteristic of our Lord therefore it should be a quality that is growing in every true believer. The Greek word is *chrestos* and is used to describe God Himself in Luke 6:35, “*for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.*” This passage signals something important relative to our deeper understanding of what God is communicating here.

Kindness carries the idea of an unconditional attribute that, when possessed, is totally independent from the way one is treated.

For example, Jeremiah the prophet speaks of the *kindness* of God toward the unrepentant sin of Israel: “*Give thanks to the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting*” (Jeremiah 33:11). It is this unrequitable (*Merriam-Webster*, unrequitable: not returnable in kind) characteristic of God,



His continuous amount of immutable *kindness* that motivated our salvation according to Titus 3:4–5. (To best remember what immutable means, think of *mutation* which means changing, and then negate that with the *im* at the front of the word: incapable of changing His nature; literally, God is incapable of mutating.)

But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

Whereas God’s response to a rebellious and sinful mankind, nonetheless, was to give *kindly* to the point of the redemption and salvation of lost souls, so should the believer possess similar attitudes and actions in speech toward those who are undeserving. Importantly, in order to achieve *kindness*, one does not need to sacrifice truth or principle. Truth and *kindness* must exist simultaneously. These qualities are often held in tension. Note for instance Proverbs 3:3: *Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.* Similarly, Paul states in 1 Corinthians 13:6, *Love ... does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth.* Jesus Christ expects every one of His followers to be both *kind* and *truthful* simultaneously! In actuality, *kindness* devoid of *truth* is spinelessness, and *truth* devoid of *kindness* is harshness. The mature believer is to be both.

B. TENDER-HEARTEDNESS

Tender-heartedness is the next attitude Paul mentions that the believer is to put on. The root word *splagchnon* means “the inward parts, the emotions”⁶ This

word can also be translated “compassionate,” and it has to do with the feeling of empathy and pain relative to another’s needs or situation. The believer is to be genuinely sympathetic toward others even if he or she does not feel like it. This stems from the realization of one’s conversion and the undeserved imputation of God’s love. Cold-heartedness and dispassionate disconnectedness are not Christlikeness.

Cold-hearted people are those who are so occupied with self that they are unconcerned about *regard[ing] one another as more important than yourselves* (Philippians 2:3). Someone who attempts to excuse cold-heartedness with, “but I am not very emotional,” is attempting to avoid the real issue. Something is wrong. To put it bluntly,

To lack compassion is to communicate being self-absorbed.

To the degree you are others-centered is the degree you are *tender-hearted*. Discipline yourself to be more interested in others and you will blossom with compassion! Show me a public servant who is absorbed in his career and self-advancement, and I will show you a struggling mate and a bad parent. Every Christ-filled temperament has a place for *tender-heartedness* toward others!

In Philippians 1:8 we find this quality existing in large measure in the apostle Paul, who in turn was emulating Christ when he states, *For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.* Whereas pagans are hard-hearted and self-centered, believers are instructed that in Christ they possess the indwelling Holy Spirit Who is *tender-hearted* and others-centered. Summarily, if you have no desire to change in this area, if what I am saying

here in strong terms doesn’t move you in the least, then you should *Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?* (2 Corinthians 13:5). True believers are others-centered and are deeply convicted when they are not.

C. FORGIVENESS

The final characteristic that Paul lists in this *put away*, put-on section of Ephesians is *forgiveness* (*charizomai*). It means, “to bestow a favor unconditionally.”⁷ The necessity of the believer capturing and holding on to this imbued attitude is singled out by the author of Ephesians with specialized, compelling reasoning—just as God in Christ also has *forgiven* you.

IV. THE COMPELLING CULMINATION

Perhaps the most poignant illustration of the necessity of God’s *forgiveness* being emulated in the life of the believer is underscored by the parable found in Matthew 18:21–35. You may recall this parable: Someone who had been forgiven for a massive amount of money would not forgive the debt of someone who owed him a little. The parable serves to illustrate the incongruity of any believer’s unforgiving heart. The Lord severely chastised the man who was unforgiving. Matthew’s instruction herein is stereophonic to the concluding Pauline clause we are examining. The believer, who has been *forgiven* much by God, must not be hypocritical in the way he treats others.

V. SUMMARY

A deep understanding of Christian theology directly aids and benefits personal behavior. Short of learning biblical truth,



there will be no change, there will be no spiritual growth. We will become *kind, tender-hearted, forgiving* people to the degree we understand the biblical instruction and underlying theological truths that relate to God being the same to us. Apart from that, there is no reason or impetus to change. May God grow your *kindness, tender-heartedness, and forgiveness!* They are the normative demeanor of every bona fide believer! May these characteristics push out your old selfish nature as you put them on! This is who you are in Christ! Model these virtues to an on-watching world in the upcoming 2024 elections!

ARTWORK ON COVER

“Calumny of Apelles” dates back to classical antiquity. Apelles was a Hellenistic painter who was falsely accused by a rival painter, Antiphilos, of conspiring against Ptolemy IV, the leader of Egypt. Apelles was arrested, but after his innocence was proven, Ptolemy offered him gold and Antiphilos as a slave. Instead, Apelles created this painting which portrayed the king with the ass’s ears of Midas who is extending his hand to Slander. Buttressing the king are Ignorance and Suspicion. In the full picture, Slander is dragging the innocent man by his hair while he prays to heaven. She is attended by Fraud and Conspiracy while Envy looks on. A weeping woman dressed in tattered black clothing is Repentance, full of shame, who is looking at Truth who points toward heaven and is slowly approaching.

1. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *An Exposition of Ephesians: Darkness and Light* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982) 279.
2. The formation of words in imitation of natural sounds: the naming of a thing or action by a more or less exact reproduction of the sound associated with it. (*The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*).
3. *Merriam-Webster*.
4. Lloyd-Jones, 282.
5. *Merriam-Webster*.
6. The ancients invariably placed the physical seat of emotions in the region of the bowels. Paul herein is literally saying, “Have strong bowels of compassion.” When Jeremiah cried out with suffering anguish in his feelings he said in Hebrew, “*my bowels, my bowels.*” And truly, when you do feel deeply about something it reflects a feeling which seems to stem from deep in the stomach.
7. W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1952) 452.

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- Port Vila Vanuatu
- Lusaka Zambia
- Harare Zimbabwe



*Making Disciples
of Jesus Christ
in the Political Arena
Throughout the World*



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