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Applying the Gospel to Sinful Anger

Thank you for being here this morning as we continue our 10 week study called Transformed by Truth. Please take your Bible and open to Ephesians 4:17. The title for our lesson this morning is applying the gospel to sinful anger. Applying the gospel to sinful anger. What Gary and I are attempting to do in this class is to encourage you with the following reminder - God is sovereign over every event in your life and He uses His Word to help you glorify Him through everything He sends your way.

As you and I learn to walk in the Spirit, letting the Word of Christ dwell richly in us, God is glorified and we are built up in Him. As you mature in Christ by applying God's Word to your life, then you can be a conduit of God's grace to help other believers mature. As you and I learn to apply the Scriptures to our own daily lives, then we are able to come alongside other people and help them apply the Scriptures to their daily lives. This is how the body of Christ matures, each part of the body doing its part so that the whole body is built up in love.

This is what we want here at Cornerstone. Every believer being equipped to understand and apply the word of God to their own lives first and then to come alongside other believers and to help them do the same. A culture where everyone learns the word of God, puts it into practice, and then loves others in the truth.

The chances are very high that at some point in your life you are going to need help applying the Scripture to sinful anger and you are going to come across someone else who needs your help to get traction in this area of their lives. What we are considering this morning is very practical.

According to two well known biblical counselors, many problems Christians deal with arise because of an inability to control sinful anger. A biblical counselor named Jay Adams writes, "Sinful anger probably is involved in 90 percent of all counseling problems." Another biblical counsellor named Robert Jones writes, **"More than thirty-five years of counseling have led me to this statistical conclusion: approximately one out of one people struggle with anger."** What we are considering today is a universal problem.

The reason I say that sinful anger is a universal problem is because in Genesis 3 we read about the entrance of sin and one chapter later in Genesis 4 we read about the effects of sin. Genesis 4 shows us the dangerous nature of sinful anger as Cain gets angry over God's rejection of his offering and kills his brother Abel and then later in chapter 4, Cain's great grandson, a man named Lamech kills a man for wounding him. That's how the Bible starts. Right away we see the reality of sinful anger and the danger of sinful anger.

We probably don't all struggle with sinful anger the same way, but we all struggle with it in some way. Why do I say that? Fits of anger are a manifestation of the flesh according to Galatians 5:20. In Galatians 5:20 Paul lists "enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions" as deeds of the flesh. Those are things we all need help to overcome by the work of the Spirit.

The law says in Exodus 20:13, "You shall not murder." Jesus takes it one step further in the sermon on the mount. In Matthew 5:21-22 He says, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire."

Jesus' standard is very high. It's not ok to be angry with someone else as long as you don't murder them. Jesus cares about our hearts and what is happening on the inside. Robert Jones, "Jesus undercuts the notion that as long as we

don't kill with our hands we are acceptable to God. If we have angry hearts or speak angry words, we still incur God's judgment—even if we never strike or injure someone. Our Lord's words bring both bad news and good news. The bad news is that you are guilty. You likely have never killed someone, but that does not make you innocent. When you internally judge or verbally criticize someone, you are guilty before God of heart murder."

Are you glad you came down to the basement this morning? As if life isn't hard enough already and now you got Pastor B reminding you how sinful you are :). Here's the thing - **when you identify sin in your life as sin, there's hope.** Jesus came to call sinners to repentance and when you acknowledge your sin and turn from it and trust Christ there's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

Robert Jones again writes, "The Lawgiver in Matthew 5:21–22, who exposes your sinful anger in all its internal and external forms, is also the Savior who offers redemption from those uncovered sins. Despite the depth of your sin, the Redeemer is big enough to help you deal biblically with your anger. Never let the weight of your exposed sin drive you to forget the Savior you need most. This means, my brother or sister, that when you get angry in your heart and then go to God to confess that sin, you are going to a God who loves you, who sent his Son to die for you, and who will forgive you and empower you to fight against your anger."

Jesus both exposes our sin and eliminates our sin.

The One who exposes our sinful anger went to the cross to die for our sinful anger. 1 Peter 2:24-25 are some of my favorite verses in the Bible. These verses give me hope. 1 Peter 2:24-25, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

Why did Christ die? He died to bear our sins in His body on the cross. What does that mean for us moving forward? United to Christ we can all live for righteousness. United to Christ we can all make progress in becoming more like Him. Jesus never got angry at the wrong things and only got angry at the right things.

Ephesians 4:17-32 was written to help us apply the gospel to specific sins, including sinful anger, to get traction in our walk with God.

Paul knew that Christians struggle with sinful anger and need a plan to deal with it in a God honoring way.

Please follow along as I read Ephesians 4:17-32:

Ephesians 4:17-32

- 17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.
- 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.
- 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.
- 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!—
- 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,
- 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,
- 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,
- 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.
- 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.
- 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

- 27 and give no opportunity to the devil.
- 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.
- 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.
- 30 And 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, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Where is the first mention of anger in this section? **Anger shows up three times in this section. Twice in verse 26 and once in verse 31.** So, why don't we start with those verses? Why don't we start by attacking the problem. Here is something I didn't understand about the Christian life for the first 10 years of my Christian life. Just because I missed it doesn't mean you missed it.

I didn't understand that Paul never assumes the gospel with people he serves. Paul always starts with the gospel like he does here. And Paul never exhorts believers to obedience apart from the gospel. Paul always helps believers deal with their sin by reminding them of the gospel and then applying the believer's union with Christ to whatever sin struggle they have.

Kirk quoted Sinclair Ferguson a few weeks ago, "Divine indicatives (statements about what God has done, is doing, or will do) logically precede and ground divine imperatives (statements about what we are to do in response)." I want you to see that in this section. To deal with sinful anger we have to slow down, back up and deal with it with the gospel in view. The apostle Paul shows us in Ephesians that apart from the gospel there is no hope for dealing with sin. Because of the gospel we have God's power to deal with any sin.

Sin thrives where no gospel is mentioned. Sin dies when the gospel is mentioned.

Let's remember the context before we walk through these verses. What is Ephesians about? **Ephesians helps us connect two important truths - Our calling in Christ and our conduct.** The first three chapters of Ephesians describes our calling in Christ and the last three chapters describe our conduct in Christ. Ephesians 4 shows us how to walk worthy inside the church in verses 1-16 and outside the church in verses 17-32.

This is a section about practical holiness. Living in the world different from the world because you are one with Christ. By the way, when did it first dawn on you that being a Christian means living different than the rest of the world? When did it dawn on you that following Christ puts you at odds with the way this broken world thinks and acts? **When did it first dawn on you that you are a 2 dollar bill surrounded by 1 dollar bills?**

I remember when this first dawned on me. I got saved as a student at The Master's University. I was saved and surrounded with people who loved the Lord and lived for Him. Then I would leave the safe confines of the master's university and go back to Texas to see my parents and spend time with the friends I grew up with. By God's grace, I changed, but they stayed the same. They were still living for sin and I was trying to live for the Savior. There was a contrast between how I thought about life as a believer and how they thought of life as an unbeliever. I was trying to say no to sin and they were still saying yes to sin. I wasn't perfect in those early days and I am still very far from perfect, but I knew I couldn't live like my old self.

This is what Paul is reminding believers in Ephesians 4:17-32 - **People who know the Lord can't live like people who don't.** That's the simple point of this section of Scripture. Holy living is not an option. If you're not pursuing holiness

that's a bad sign. **Holiness is the result of being born again.** We are called with a holy calling to live holy lives empowered by the Holy Spirit.

It's probably been 5-7 years since Paul has been in Ephesus. He had spent three years there preaching the gospel and discipling believers. He moved on because God had other work for him to do, but he never kept caring about these people and how they were still living for Christ. He knew they needed help to live in a pagan culture to the praise of God. So do we. We need all the help we can get to be in the world and not live like the world.

We live in a world of sinfully angry people and God calls us in Christ to be different. There are three things we learn in Ephesians 4:17-32 that can help us deal with sinful anger in a God glorifying way.

1. The Priority for Dealing with Sinful Anger - Ephesians 4:17-19
2. The Power for Dealing with Sinful Anger - Ephesians 4:20-24
3. The Plan for Dealing with Sinful Anger - Ephesians 4:25-32

Let's start with the priority for dealing with sinful anger. Notice how Paul begins this section in verse 17, "Now this I say and testify in the Lord." What does that mean? It means we should raise our spiritual antennas and tune in to what Paul is writing. Paul is called to be an apostle by the will of God and he writes these words with the authority of Christ.

The words we are about to consider together are not an option for our lives. Notice what Paul tells them to stop doing in verse 17. In the middle of verse 17 what does he tell them to no longer do? "That you must no longer walk as the Gentiles walk." Walk means how you live your life on a daily basis. What is Paul telling believers to do? Stop living like the rest of the world. Sinners saved by grace are called to live differently.

Paul is telling people who do know Christ to stop living like the pagan world around them. There were people in the church in Ephesus who were Gentiles who had come to faith in Christ. This church was comprised of Gentile and Jewish believers in Christ. Look with me back at Ephesians 2:11-13. Ephesians 2:11 is the first command in Ephesians for Gentiles who had come to faith in Christ:

Ephesians 2:11-13

- 11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—
- 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.
- 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Paul is addressing Gentiles in the church and commanding them to remember who they were before God saved them and how God saved them. He reminds them how God brought them near to Himself through the blood of Christ when they were without hope and without God in the world. **He reminds them of their salvation in chapter 2 and then he tells them to keep living like it in chapter 4.**

Look back at Ephesians 4:17. I want you to see how Paul walks these believers back through the way an unbeliever thinks and lives as a pattern not to follow. This is what Paul is doing in Ephesians 4:17-32 - **He is contrasting unbelievers with believers.** If we are not going to live like the rest of the world, we need to know how the rest of the world lives. He wants us to get this. A believer can't live like an unbeliever and the way we stop living like unbelievers is by remembering how unbelievers live.

How do unbelievers live? Notice in verses 17-19 after Paul tells Christians to stop living like non-Christians, he walks them back through the process of sin.

Ephesians 4:17-19

- 17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.
- 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.
- 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

Here is what I want you to see from these verses - The way people live on the inside is the result of what's happening on the inside. Sin doesn't just happen. There's a pattern. There is a pattern for the practice of sin. **Sin is a process that starts in the mind.** Here it starts with futile thinking. Thinking that is void of God and His purposes for the world. Do you see the process of sin in this section? Harold Hoehner describes Ephesians 4:17-19 as "a horrible picture of sinful people's selfish and perverted ways."

Why does Paul walk believers back through the reason unbelievers live for sin? **Because he wants us to remember why we don't.** Friend, why don't you live for sin anymore as a way of life? Why are you not this way? That's a very important question because how to see the source of biblical change is a really big deal.

If you think you are the cause for the change in your life you're wrong. You and I are not the change agents in the Christian life. Christ is. In verses 20-24 Paul reminds these believers why they were different than the world around them and Who made the difference.

What I want you to see next is:

2. The Power for Dealing with Sinful Anger - Ephesians 4:20-24

What happened that changed these people? What made them different than the culture around them? Paul provides the answer in verses 20-24 - if you are different, this is what made the difference:

Ephesians 4:20-24

- 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!—
- 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,
- 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,
- 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,
- 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Again, what is Paul doing in this section? He is telling believers to stop living like unbelievers. Why? Because of what happened when they heard and believed the gospel. They didn't make the difference in their lives - Christ did. **But in verse 20 is a sharp contrast.** John Stott, "Over against heathen hardness, darkness and recklessness, Paul sets a whole process of Christian moral education."

He takes them back to what happened when God saved them. Three parallel expressions which center on three verbs all in what is called the aorist tense. This past week we spent one evening in the Gillen home looking back at family pictures. We went back in time and watched home video's from when our girls were little. There were a lot of aw's and look at her, she is so cute from momma.

It's fun to go back and think about good times in our lives. What Paul does in verses 20-24 is to take us back to the best time in our lives. The time when the gospel took root in our hearts and God took us from being dead in sin and made us alive together with Christ.

What Paul is doing in Ephesians 4:20-24 is taking us back to the time when God enrolled us in the school of salvation.

Enrolling in the school of salvation arts with learning Christ. When we go back and read Acts 18-20 we see how Paul took these people the gospel and how they heard Christ and trusted Christ. Christ is the subject and the substance of Christian teaching. Evangelists preach Christ and that is how sinners learn Christ. Paul reminds them that the Christ who they learned was calling them to a new kingdom and a new way of life.

Second, they heard Him. There's no preposition in the original greek manuscript. They didn't hear about Christ - They heard Him. He Himself is their teacher. John Stott, "Paul assumes that through the voice of their Christian teachers, they had actually heard Christ's voice. When sound biblical moral instruction is given, it may be said that Christ is teaching about Christ."

Third, they were taught in Him. It's a good exercise to get a cup of coffee or whatever you need to drink to stay focused and read back through Ephesians and notice all the references to the believer being in Christ. It's Paul's favorite description of a believer. **A believer is in Christ.** Paul's preaching connected sinners to the Savior. That's what makes the difference.

Notice the shift in emphasis from Christ at the end of verse 20 to Jesus at the end of verse 21. From His deity to His humanity. Why the contrast? The historical Jesus is the embodiment of truth. If you want to know truth in a world of lies, look to Jesus. He is the truth.

Verses 22-24 describes what happened when they learned, heard and were taught the truth as it is in Jesus - They put off their old selves, were renewed in the Spirit of their minds and put on the new self. The picture here is taking off grave clothes and putting on glory clothes.

Harold Hoehner, "Believers have been **made new in the attitude of their minds**; they are no longer futile in their thinking, darkened in their understanding, and ignorant (vv. 18–19). These are not commands, for the construction here (and in the parallel passage in Col. 3:9–10) is not imperative. They are facts that

believers have learned, as is also seen in Romans 6:2–10 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. Believers are new people in Christ, and hence they can no longer live as Gentiles live, as the next exhortations state."

Putting off our old selves and putting on our new selves is instantaneous.

Being renewed in the Spirit of your mind is ongoing. At the moment of salvation, as Paul describes back in chapter 2:1-10, we go from being dead in sin to alive with Christ. We are positionally raised up and seated with Christ in the heavens places. Our old life in sin is replaced with a new life in Christ and the Spirit gives us a new heart. A new renewed mind that can think God's thoughts after Him. Believer, you have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

To keep our conduct moving in the right direction there has to be the continual renewing of our minds. Just as an unbelievers sinful life is the result of sinful thinking, holy lives are the result of constant mind renewal. That is why we need to never move on from the gospel as believers. Our daily devotions should always include some time of remembering the cross and the empty tomb. What Christ did and who we are in Him is foundational for biblical change.

Some of you are starting to think - This is fine, Pastor Blake, but I thought this was a lesson on how to apply the gospel to sinful anger. It is. We are about to get there. But I want you to see how Paul helps Christians deal with sin. **He doesn't help Christians deal with sin apart from the gospel. He helps Christians deal with sin because of the gospel.**

James Montgomery Boice, "Believers are to follow certain Christian standards precisely because God has already made them new creatures in Christ by putting away the old nature and putting on the new. This is an important point. The apostle is not merely urging a new and higher standard of morality on people. That is an utterly futile thing. We cannot be genuinely better by mere moral suasion. That is not it at all. **Rather, Paul is demanding a high form of behavior precisely because something decisive has already taken place. We have already been made new in Christ. That is why we should and must**

act like it. We, like Lazarus, have been brought out of death into life by Christ. As part of that spiritual miracle our old graveclothes, which were appropriate for a corpse but not for a living body, have been taken off, and we have been reclothed in wedding garments in preparation for that great wedding supper of the Lamb. **From this point on we should act like members of the wedding party.”**

We have seen The Priority for Dealing with Sinful Anger in Ephesians 4:17 and the Power for Dealing with Sinful Anger in Ephesians 4:20-24. Let's finish with

3. The Plan for Dealing with Sinful Anger - Ephesians 4:25-32

To deal with sin we need a plan. A plan that comes from God empowered by the Spirit of God motivated by the grace of God. That's what we see in Ephesians 4:25-32. What Paul does in this section is that he practically identifies sins we used to live in and how to putt off those old sins and replace them with new acts of righteousness consistent with our new nature in Christ.

He shows us how the gospel changes our words, our anger, our work and our worship. He gets down to the nitty gritty details of every day life. Friend, if you want to change practically for the glory of God this section can be the game changer. Obeying these verses can change you and when you change God is glorified and people around you are blessed.

Ephesians 4:25-32

- 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.
- 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,
- 27 and give no opportunity to the devil.
- 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.
- 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.
- 30 And 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, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

What I want you to see in these verses is that Paul is addressing practical areas of the Christian life. In each of these areas there is something specific to stop doing, something specific to start doing and a motivation to keep doing it. Can we work through these verses together because this is God's plan for dealing with specific sins in specific ways.

How does the gospel change our speech in verses 25 and 29? What are we told to stop doing with our words and start doing with our words and why? In verse 25 we are to stop falsehood. Having put away falsehood. Did anyone lie in here before God saved you or shading the truth for your own advantage? That has to change. How? Having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth. Why? What's the motivation? For we are members of one another. Truth is conforming one's words to reality.

Down in verse 29 we see another reminder of what to stop doing with our words and start doing with our words and why. This one verse could be a game changer. We use lots of words. What if we only spoke this way in Ephesians 4:29? How awesome would it be to be around such a person? Harold Hoehner, "Believers are **not** to speak **unwholesome** (*sapros*, "rotten") words (cf. 5:4), but **helpful** (*agathos*, "good, beneficial"; cf. 4:28) words for the purpose of edification. Good words **benefit** (lit., "give grace" or enablement to) the hearers. One's words are to be true and pure and also are to contribute to benefiting others."

Paul starts with our speech and then in verses 26-27 he moves to anger. Finally we've arrived. How do we apply the gospel to anger? Ephesians 4:26-27, "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil." Paul is reaching back and quoting a Psalm. In Psalm 37 we read about a time in King David's life when he was tempted to become angry. Why? Because he was surrounded by wicked dishonest evil men. David

was a righteous man surrounded by wicked man and it bothered him. His anger was not wrong, but it needed to be handled the right way. How does God help David?

Psalm 37:7-10

- 7 Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way,
over the man who carries out evil devices!
- 8 Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath!
Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.
- 9 For the evildoers shall be cut off,
but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.
- 10 In just a little while, the wicked will be no more;
though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there.

How does God help David deal with his anger toward sinners that surround him? God reminds David that He will deal with evildoers in his own perfect timing so there is no need for David to get angry and take matters into his own hands and sin against the Lord.

It is right to feel anger toward the sinful world around us but we cannot allow righteous anger to turn to sinful anger. I've seen this. A believer who once lived for sin getting angry with an unbeliever who is still living for sin. They make to personal and get angry with pagans for living like pagans. This is not just true for how believers deal with unconverted people.

Have you ever gotten angry with a converted person? A believer? Someone you sleep next to at night? It usually starts with a minor irritation that we don't get control of and it leads to some form of anger or frustration. You never. You always. Something we don't deal with internally builds up on our hearts like shaking up a can of dr pepper and then we explode.

When we get sinfully angry and don't deal with it, what happens? This could also be true when a believer doesn't deal with their anger with another believer? The

devil gets a foothold. The devil loves to divide believers between other believers. Satan loves conflict and he hates conflict resolution.

What is Paul's counsel? "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil." Learn to control feelings of anger and if you don't, make it right sooner rather than later.

James Montgomery Boice writes the following on dealing with anger, "It is as wrong not to be angry in a situation demanding anger, such as a gross injustice, as it is to be angry at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons. But we must admit that we are most often angry in precisely that way—at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons. And it is because our own personal feelings, pride, and self-image are wrapped up in our reactions. How do we deal with this? I suppose there are many things that might be said at this point, but what Paul does say is that we must deal with anger quickly, that is, before the sun sets on our wrath. To allow it to fester and swell and surge about for any extended period is quite dangerous because it gives the devil a foothold, as Paul says. Anger leads to malice and slander, and these lead to many other destructive sins. The only thing to do is to confess the anger and root it out as rapidly as possible. And even in the case of righteous anger—which we probably have too little of, Christians being sinfully tolerant of gross evil—we should be "slow to become angry" (James 1:19). If we heeded this, we should be angry far less often than we are."

Ephesians 4:26-27 shows us how to deal with anger. Ephesians 4:31 shows us how much anger we should allow to remain in our lives. Ephesians 4:31, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." Where I grew up all means all and that's all all means.

Notice anger is surrounded by other sins. Anger grows in the soil of bitterness and wrath and leads to clamor and slander. Anger never lives in isolation from other sins. When you don't put away all anger it will inevitably lead to other sins. It usually starts with being bitter about something in your life that is not working out the way you think it should.

Even believers can become bitter with God when life doesn't work out the way they think it should. To deal with sinful anger often starts with dealing with bitterness. How do we deal with bitterness? Stay with me here. **Your life may not be working out the way you hoped it should, but if you're saved you have nothing to be bitter about.** If you were a child of wrath (Ephesians 2:3) and now you are loved by God and raised up with Christ you have nothing to be bitter about. Why would we be bitter when we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ?

In Ephesians 4:31 Paul provides a practical list of sins and he tells us to get rid of all of them. Take off those grave clothes. To deal with sinful anger we need to put it away once for all and keep preaching the gospel to our own hearts every single day. And we need to replace the sin with a new set of character qualities. Verse 32 shows us what to replace the sins in verse 31 with. Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Do you see what Paul is doing in this section? He tells us to stop living like the rest of the world and then he shows us why and what to do. Again, anyone who says the Bible is not practical for everyday life is not reading their Bible. Could Paul be more practical in this section about how the gospel changes us in specific ways? The problem is not with the clarity of Scripture. If we did what Paul writes in this section we would change and God would be glorified and people around us would be so richly blessed.

Imagine a marriage where both people lived this way. Replacing the list in Ephesians 4:31 with verse 32 - Constant kindness and tenderheartedness and continual forgiveness because of how much they have been forgiven. Wouldn't that be sweet? Notice in verse 30 and we will be doing what Paul tells us not to do. I think Paul inserted this verse to make this even more personal.

The Holy Spirit resides in those who hear and believe the gospel. He makes belief possible. When He moves in, He seals us for the day of redemption. That's awesome. What do we do with Him when He moves into our hearts? Verse 30, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." The Holy Spirit is not an it. He is not an impersonal force. The Holy Spirit is God and our bodies are His temple.

How do we grieve God the Holy Spirit? By not allowing Him to lead our daily lives. By knowing what He reveals in His Word and then doing what we feel instead of what He reveals. By being disobedient instead of obedient. We grieve the Holy Spirit when He shows us how to live and we don't pursue it. God takes our disobedience personal.

God the Holy Spirit is pleased when we trust His power and follow His plan. Every time we do what these verses teach us to do God the Holy Spirit is pleased because His goal is to make us more like Christ.

The way we glorify God is by rehearsing the gospel and applying it to every area of our lives. We remember what Christ did for us and we remember what happened when God saved us and we cooperate with the Holy Spirit by replacing specific sins with specific acts of righteousness. That is how we change and that is how God is glorified in our lives on a daily basis.

Remember the same power God used to raise Christ from the dead, resurrection power, is available to every believer to live the new life we are called to live. We have the power, let's follow the plan.