

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## Deliverance From Unhealthy Anger

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**“Be angry, and do not miss-the-mark (‘make an error; sin’); do not let the sun go down on your provocation,<sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil an opportunity...<sup>29</sup> Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such as is good for edification of the need, that it may give grace to those who hear.<sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.<sup>31</sup> All bitterness and rage and anger and shouting and injurious-speech (slander, name-calling) let it be taken away from you, along with all malice.<sup>32</sup> And come to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving (lit., ‘gracing’) each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven (‘graced’) you.”**  
Ephesians 4:26-27,29-32

It is important to see these verses together in the same context. Remember, that **Paul is writing to the believers called out to interact with one another to help each other grow**, ...by “truthing in love”. The purpose of our interaction is to “build up” one another. **Our concern should be to affirm and strengthen one another in Christ, ...to help each person come to the (1.) unity of the faith** (to learn “the doctrine of the apostles” – Acts 2:42); **(2.) the experiential-recognition of Jesus in one’s life**; and **(3.) to become a mature person, ...becoming like Jesus** in our character and emotions. This is all what Paul described as the goal of our “work of service unto the building-up of the body of Christ”, ...a work which we are *all* to be actively participating in, according to verses 12, 13 of this same chapter.

**It is crucial to clearly understand what we are to be helping one another discover and accomplish.** Without this, our interactions are only on an unproductive, surface level. We are to be helping to shape and sharpen one another, until we all find our maturity in Christ. **This maturity is our heritage and calling in Jesus, ...and it is attainable!** But, it will not happen if **we ourselves do not embrace this process of growth for ourselves**, ...nor will it happen if **we do not surround ourselves with brothers and sisters who are also intentionally pursuing this kind of growth.** The reason this is so vital is that God has chosen to express His grace through our brothers and sisters in Christ. **We need each other to be a support system, a sounding board, a mirror, and a team of agitators that are advocating and insisting on our development to become like Jesus and learn to become active team members**, according to our unique spiritual giftings and the insights of the Spirit. **AND, in order for this to work, we need to lay aside the “masks” that we tend to hide behind, and honestly share our thoughts and process with one another.** Paul wrote, “Laying aside falsehood (‘fakeness’), speak truth each one with the one who is near...” (4:25).

**“Be angry...” It is important to see that there is a time for anger.** Anger and indignation were experienced by Jesus Himself (Mk.3:1-5; 10:13-16; Jn. 2:14-17; 11:33), and He acted in response to these emotions. **Emotions are a natural response to what we perceive in our surroundings. Anger usually arises when we feel we are being unfairly treated, or someone is invasive toward us** (i.e., unwelcome interference, meddling, presumption or intrusive). **We also will often feel this emotion arise when we witness injustice or mistreatment of others, as well.**

**Emotions can be helpful indicators** that can give us information about our surroundings and our interactions with others, ...but it is important to remember that **they are not infallible.** They are based upon our “perception”, ...and sometimes we can be misguided, or jump to faulty assessments. **Our emotions, however, are there to tell us to “pay attention”.** If we feel an irritation, we must evaluate what is really going on before we react.

**So, we are told to “be angry and do not make-a-mistake”.** The word translated as “sin” in this passage means “to-aim-at-the-target-and-miss; to-make-an-error”. **This is a quotation from Psalm 4:4.** It is a direct quote from the Greek Septuagint translation of the OT. **The Hebrew word here is to “be agitated, disquieted, perturbed”** and could refer to anger, rage or trembling. **This is very descriptive of what we feel when the emotion of anger is stirred.**

**We are not a prisoner to the feelings we may experience, however.** We can assess them, evaluate whether there is due cause for concern, and then determine what an appropriate response may be. In fact, **we are charged with making a wise decision, “...don’t make a mistake.”**

**We are also charged to deal with the anger.** We are not to allow it to smolder, unaddressed. **We are to determine an appropriate response, and deal with it, or dismiss it.** If we don’t, the enemy will use that against us.

It is interesting that the verse about those who used to steal would be inserted here. Part of their growth and maturation is to take responsibility for their lives, and find respectable work. Not only should they seek to meet their own needs, but also enlarge their focus to see their role in potentially helping others.

The next verse reminds us that **our speech is important.** **We are not to allow any “unwholesome” word come out of our mouth.** The word Paul used means “rotten, decayed, rancid, putrid, corrupted, of bad quality, and unfit for use.” **Instead, we are to speak what is good or beneficial toward “building up”** the need, that it may give grace to those who hear what we have to say. **Again, the growth and benefit of others is in view.** Jesus said that **a person speaks**

out of the fullness of their heart. We express what we have stored up, or built up, inside of us. **Whether that is a lifetime of poor content, or a heart full of angry and bitter emotions, it will come out in our speech** (Lk. 6:45).

Notice that our treatment of one another can grieve, insult or even offend the Holy Spirit! (vs. 30.) ***If we want to be led by the Spirit, we must adjust ourselves to be attractive to Him, not offensive.*** We honor or dishonor Him by how we treat others. **He will draw near to reveal more of Himself, or withdraw, in response to our words and actions.**

**Look at verse 31. We have a whole list of angry emotions and expressions that we are to put aside.**

**Bitterness** is poisonous resentment fueled by unresolved anger. It is a judgment against a person for some past offense. The root word means “cut” or “prick”, referring to an original offense that has become infected with resentment. Hebrews 12:15 warns that a “root of bitterness” (a bitter person) can spring up in the midst of a group of believers and cause trouble, or annoyance, and actually negatively affect many people. The next word describes “**rage**” or “**explosive anger**”. That is what most of us think of when we think of anger, because it is the most outwardly obvious and out-of-control expression of anger. It is like a volcano erupting or “blowing its stack”. Usually, there is a build-up of emotional pressure from unaddressed irritations or unresolved angry emotions that will suddenly flare up in an extreme outburst of rage. We definitely don’t want to be ruled by *that* kind of anger, but we do not often take the steps that are necessary to keep it from building up inside. The next word, “**anger**” is the very same word used in verse 26. There, we are commanded to “be angry”. Here, even *that* kind of anger is to be put aside. This word refers to a mental bent to right a wrong or confront injustice. “**Clamor**” refers to loud, noisy, verbal exchanges, shouting or yelling. If a soft answer turns away wrath (Prov. 15:1), loud yelling only fuels the fire of rage, and escalates the angry exchange. The next word is translated differently in various versions. It is the Greek word, ***blasphēmia***. It refers to “injurious or hurtful speech”. When you say the word, “blasphemy”, you can hear the word, “fame” in the root. Blasphemy is to “defame” someone, ...either by direct insult, and name calling, or by speaking slanderously to others about the person they are speaking against. It is designed to attack and diminish the person, and tear down their sense of self-worth or their reputation. It is the direct opposite of “building up”. It is tearing them down. Finally, “**malice**” refers to “ill will” or “evil intent”. **“Let it be put away from y’all.”**

**We are not to live with the anger. Unaddressed anger can turn from a smoldering irritation to flaming rage.** It can take on a life of its own, unless we address the cause, or determine that the appropriate thing is to put it aside. Proverbs 6:27 warns us, “Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?” It is a rhetorical question. The obvious answer is, “No!” **We are to make short work of the emotion of anger. Either we address the issue, the thing that provoked the anger, or we are to put it aside.**

In Psalm 4, David had been mistreated and mocked by people, and he was agitated. His counsel? “Meditate (lit., ‘speak’) in your heart upon your bed, and be still.” The sting of rebuke was real, and was unfair. **David learned to get away from the negativity, and talk it over in his mind and with God. He processed the anger by acknowledging the feeling, and working through it until he came to inner quietness. We can help one another process emotions, by talking things through to where we can come to a place of internal peace.** This is *not* just telling someone that they “shouldn’t feel that way.” They *do*! **Talking things through means that we help them come to a different, larger perception, so that their emotions naturally change.** They need to come to the place of genuine inner peace. The talking helps to release some of the pent-up emotional “steam”. Hopefully, it will also help the person come to see their situation from a different perspective, one where they can entrust themselves to God’s care. The bitter person in Hebrews 12:15 is described as someone who is “lacking in”, or “in need of” the grace of God. **Pondering God’s grace, especially in light of your own sins and unworthiness, can help you look beyond the pricking offense to see that God is working to transform the offender.** God will deal with the injustice. Your job is to forgive.

**AND, that is Paul’s next thought: “Come to be to one another kind, tender-hearted (‘well-compassioned’), gracing to yourselves, according as God in Christ Jesus graced y’all.”** Note that the verb at the beginning of the verse seems to indicate that we may not start out there. **We may have to get our thoughts and feelings aligned by pondering God’s grace for us, so that we can “come to be” kind and gracious to one another.** We saw that David did that by meditating (lit., ‘mumbling, talking under one’s breath’) until he was able to come to rest inside. **There is a significant difference between our translations of verse 31, and what the Greek actually says.** The verb is not “let [anger] be put away” or “let it be removed”. That seems to imply that I am doing it. The Greek is passive, and it literally says, “let it be lifted from” or “be taken away”. In other words, **we are not to simply “stuff it”, or “put it aside”.** We are to do as David did, ...ponder, meditate, talk it out in light of God’s great grace and allow the anger to be lifted off of us. In other words, **we are not to hold onto the anger, and feed it. We are to go to God and enlarge our perspective, in light of His grace toward us and that other person,** and the many times He has shown *us* amazing grace. **As we do this, our emotions will soften and lighten, and our grace-filled Shepherd will lift from us the burden of anger and resentment.** As we ponder His heart, and trust Him, we will find ourselves wanting to let these heavy emotions go, so that our hearts can be free to draw near in worship. **We are then ready to show grace to others, as God has done to us.**