

Ephesians 4:22-5:2 “Do you often grieve the Holy Spirit?”

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.

²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

³⁰ **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ¹ ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.**

¹ Refer to Genesis 6:5, 6, regarding God’s grief for mankind after the creation.

“(1) Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children (2) and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Suppose you accurately polled all Christians in the world.

What percent of believers would say that they daily remember that God’s Spirit lives in them?

How many of us have even thought of the Holy Spirit since last Sunday?

And yet the Bible says: “Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him (Christ).”²

The Bible clearly tells us that we are not Christians if God’s Spirit is not in us, yet most church-goers are barely conscious of God’s Spirit.

A great disconnect exists, doesn’t it?

According to the Bible, believers are not just folks who believe in God and attend church.

²Romans 8:9 NRSV

Christians speak and live in such a way that God’s Spirit wants to dwell in them: “And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”³

Christians work seriously to be Christ-like in behavior and attitude to welcome God’s Spirit.

We live by Jesus’ John 14:15-17 promise: “If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”⁴

Are you aware the Spirit wants to live with you and in you?

How do we avoid grieving God’s Spirit so that He is pleased to dwell in us?

A major way is: remove bitterness and rage from our brains.

Norma and I differ in attitudes toward clutter.

She often goes on a clutter kicks cleaning rooms of all unnecessary objects.

I’ll go through the objects she ejects saying, “I’d like to keep this and this,” and drag them back.

- **In my office I rarely clean everything.**
- **I can tolerate certain levels of clutter.**
 - **Dust and disorganization don’t bother me as they bother Norma.**
- **If I can walk through my office and find most of the things I’m looking for within an hour, I’m comfortable.**
There are limits, of course.

Some areas of houses need frequent cleaning.

One day I hoped to eat some strawberries and whipped cream.

The strawberries had been in the refrigerator a few days.

Norma took them out, saw mold on them, and tossed them.

Penicillin is made from certain types of mold, I understand, but I’m not sure that was the type we had on our strawberries.

You all know how flour tends gets weevils and we sometimes have to toss it.

Health people advise us to chuck meat that has been in the refrigerator more than three days.

³ Ephesians 2:22 NIV & 1 Corinthians 6:19 NIV

⁴ John 14:15-17 NIV

We understand the need for eliminating clutter for good health and for keeping our computers running efficiently.

It is a shame we rarely recognize that clutter contaminates our minds.

Today’s text identifies many brain toxins.

God’s Word wisely counsels us to toss those poisons.

It warns us of disastrous effects when we don’t clear certain emotions from our minds.

1. “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

When we accept Christ and die to the old person in us, God places his Spirit in us.

In Acts 2, Peter explained the process:

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call.”⁵

This is not a gift the Holy Spirit gives us; the Holy Spirit is the gift.

God places His seal of ownership on us.

The Holy Spirit is God’s official seal showing that we belong to Him.

In the last century, when I worked for Tidewater Oil Company, the company had little metallic labels they applied and attached to everything the company owned.

- **The company wanted to identify what belonged to it.**
- **Chairs, desks, office equipment—all had those metallic seals on them.**
- They wanted us to remember: “This typewriter belongs to the company; do not take it home.”

The Holy Spirit is God’s sign of ownership on us.

The Spirit’s presence in us means: “This person belongs to the Father.”

- **The Lord never leaves us or forsakes us.**
- **He is with us all the time.**
- **It helps to keep this in mind when we think we are by ourselves and no one is watching.**

The Holy Spirit signifies something else.

God wants us to enjoy eternity with him:

⁵ Acts 2:38, 39 NIV

“Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”⁶

First, the Holy Spirit is within every Christian signifying God’s ownership.

Two, the Spirit signifies that God wants us to enjoy heaven forever with him.

But, we grieve God’s Spirit when certain things clutter our minds.

2. “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”

Paul means that we need to clean, remove, sweep, throw out all clutter and contamination from our brains.

The sentence structure in English translations is interesting.

Most version put the verb **“Get rid”** first.

Some split the verb and start with **“let.”**

In the original, Paul began with the nouns and later placed the verb.

It literally reads: “All bitterness and rage and anger and brawling and slander, toss them, along with every form of malice.”

**The verse is more forceful as originally written.
But I am not upset about it.**

Let’s do a test brain inspection today.

You must look inside your mind because only you and God know what is in there.

This reminder: Here are things that displease God’s Spirit and ruin our minds.

Bitterness is first: “an incensed and angry attitude of mind” to a neighbor.⁷

Ever get a bitter taste in your mouth over an incident?

I have stayed bitter over events and muttered about them for years.

I have wasted a lot of time and energy in bitterness and I need to get over it.

Bitterness badly clutters our minds.

Paul used a form of the word bitterness in Colossians 3:19: “Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them.”

⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:5 NIV

⁷ Michealis, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume VI, page 125.

The word translated harsh is a form of bitterness i.e., don't be dumping all your resentment on them

Alan Redpath said, “I recall a man once saying to me: ‘I have a fierce temper, but I suppose that is my cross!’

“My friend” I said to him (lovingly I hope!) “That is not your cross. It is your wife’s cross, but it is your sin.”⁸

A fierce temper probably arises from bitterness we never resolve.

An old hillbilly farmer had a wife who nagged him unmercifully. From morning till night (and sometimes later), she *was* always complaining about something. The only time he got any relief was when he was out plowing with his old mule.

He tried to plow a lot.

One day, when he was out *plowing*, *his* wife brought him lunch *in* the field. He drove the old mule into the shade, sat down on a stump, and began to eat his lunch. Immediately, *his* wife began nagging him again. Complain, nag, complain; nag; on and on.

All of a sudden, the old mule lashed out with both *hind* feet, caught her smack in the back of the head. Killed her dead on the spot.

At the funeral, the minister noticed something rather odd. When a woman mourner would approach the old farmer" he would listen for a minute, then nod, his head in agreement; but when a man mourner approached him, he would listen for a minute, and then shake his head in disagreement.

He did this so consistently, the minister decided to ask the old farmer about it. So after the funeral, the minister spoke to the old farmer, and asked him why he nodded his head and agreed with the women, but always shook his head and disagreed with all the men.

The old farmer said, “Well, the women would come up and say something about how nice my wife looked, or how pretty her dress was, so I'd nod my head in agreement.”

“And what about the men?” the minister asked. “They wanted to know *if* the mule was for sale.”

Do you suppose that lots of bitter men must have lived in that region?

If we carry bitterness toward anyone—husband, wife, son, daughter, neighbor, co-worker, or President—we need to toss it.

⁸ Alan Redpath, *Victorious Christian Faith*

Otherwise we grieve God’s Holy Spirit.

Rage is the second word Paul used.

Ralph Waldo Emerson-“We boil at different degrees.”

The Greek word translated “rage” is from a term to “breathe hard”.

When we’re in a rage, that’s what we do isn’t it--breath hard?

Nostrils flare so we can take on more air.

“There is a sack I carry around,
It sits upon my back.
Whenever I feel angry or mad
I put it in this sack.
Resentment goes in as well as hate,
Bitterness, heartbreak and blues.
If ever you choose to argue with me
You'll likely go into it, too.

The sack is strong, it carries a lot,
But when it is full, what to do?
One day without warning,
I'll take that sack
And dump the whole load on you.”⁹

Proverbs 29:11 “A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.”

In Greek the word for *patience* is related to the word for *rage*.

It has the prefix *macro* in front of it, and means *long-fused*.

Jesus wants us to clear rage from our minds.

3. The word translated *anger* in the original is a very strong term, too.

We’re talking about a violent passion that ends up in wrath.

Someone said, “Every time we get angry, we drive a nail into our own coffin.”

Some experts say about anger, wrath, rage, etc.: “It’s in your genes, or it’s your parents’ fault; society is to blame or people of another race, language, religion, or political view. You can let ‘it all hang out’ because it is justified.”

The more rage some political commentators express, the more popular they become.

The Holy Spirit says: it’s not what happens to you, it is how you react to what happens to you that is important.

⁹ This was an original poem by an author who was too ashamed to sign it.

Do you carry bitterness, anger, or rage toward anyone?

You are grieving God's Holy Spirit, who wants to dwell in you.

The antidote to anger and rage is found in verse 32 of our text: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

"The dwelling of God is with men."

Let me challenge you this way:

The Holy Spirit is God dwelling in us to encourage us and strengthen us.

He does not make us proud, satisfied with ourselves, or feeling righteous.

The Spirit makes us deeply thankful for God's mercy and love.

All believers are sinners saved only by God's grace.

Spend time today cleaning your brain.

Check all the nooks and crannies.

Toward whom do you carry bitterness? See attached "My Notes."

- 1. Note that name (s).**
- 2. Ask God to bless that person.**
- 3. Pray for him/her every day this week.**

4. Ask God to forgive you for your bitterness toward that person.

God's Spirit will more fully dwell in you.

You will enjoy greater peace.

Bob Blair

PO Box 176

Cleghorn, IA 51014

www.robertblairbooks.com