

Discovering Our Purpose

A people of love and forgiveness

Intro: Our studies of God's purpose for the church have stressed several aspects of our day to day lives. We've learned that God wants us to be:
people of honesty who speak the truth;
people of conviction who know how to react to evil;
people of industry who share with others
people of healthy speech who know how to edify others.

God wants us to put away the old habits and attitudes of our sinful way of life and put on likeness of His Son Jesus Christ. "Take off the grave clothes and put on the grace clothes!" Our verses today present perhaps one of the greatest challenges we face.

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

We may first be puzzled by the seeming contradiction between this verse and v. 26. The solution is to realize that they speak of two different kinds of anger. This anger is the kind that comes from selfishness and a rebellious spirit against God rather than godliness and submissiveness to God. Paul gives several examples of the ways this anger may manifest itself:

1. Bitterness--The feeling of being cheated that poisons the whole spirit, cf. Col. 3:19.
2. Wrath--Judgmental anger
3. Anger--Selfish anger
4. Clamor—Quarrels, shouting or angry wars of words.
5. Slander--from the same words we get devil, diabolos. To accuse falsely.
6. Malice--ill will, evil intent, literally "badness"

Many overt sins begin in an angry heart. When our hearts are possessed by such anger we cannot live the holy life God seeks from us. God requires that we get control over our emotions so we will have control over our actions. We must learn to let go of our resentments or they will destroy our marriages, our churches, and our friendships. How often do these things manifest themselves in our lives? They can't be blamed on an Irish heritage or someone else's conduct. We must accept personal responsibility to check these carnal impulses. This can be done by the exercise of God-like and Christ-like attitudes.

But be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Kind—To consider the feelings of others and seek to make them happy
Tender-hearted—comes from a word describing the inner organs of the body which we regarded by the Greeks as the seat of deep feelings of tenderness or compassion and a prefix meaning "good or well".

Forgiving—the word means to be gracious toward others by releasing them from the debt of wrongs committed

Someone may say, “But how can I treat someone who has wronged me with these attitudes?” The answer, “God did it for you! You must do it for them”!

Tit. 3:5; Rom. 2:4;

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

This gets to the heart of what it means to be a Christian.

Our standard is God. Jesus said so! Mt. 5:48.

Just as a father loves his children and gives them a good example, so God has done to us. Just as children are expected to bear the likeness of their genetic fathers, so God's children should be like him. Paul uses the word from which we get the word "mimic".

Paul is thinking of that forgiveness that God demonstrated. Now he urges us to imitate Him—to walk in His love and forgiveness.

Jesus also has left us an example of love:

He loved you...

He gave himself up for us (He is said to do this for us individually).

A offering to God (From O.T. levitical system, sacrifice indicating offering of life as a substitute, sweet aroma symbolizing acceptance to God)

And so we are encouraged to do: 1 Jn. 3:16