

INTRODUCTION

As I recall, there were four basic taste groups: salty, sweet, sour, and bitter. Apparently now they have added another – umami. Of these, the one that takes the most effort to acquire is bitter. We can grow to like coffee, dark chocolate, and beer, but kale, arugula, and dandelion greens are harder to swallow at first. It is also the one we can take in smallest quantities. We also use the four of them metaphorically to describe emotional states, only one of which is positive. In the NT, bitterness is always negative, and it leads off the list of things we are to put off.

I. PUT OFF NASTINESS – 31

A. Bitterness

1. It is a negative attitude toward others or towards life that consumes us from within and colors our worlds grey.
2. It is a settled hard-heartedness because of the bad things that others have done to us or that have happened to us.

B. Rage and anger

1. These are two different words and also different from the one used in verse 26, but they are all roughly synonymous.
2. Now we can confirm that verse 26 was not allowing anything but righteous anger and not giving a pass for self-centered anger until sundown.
3. It is difficult to distinguish exactly among these different kinds of anger, but the point is to get rid of all of them: occasional outbursts, prolonged indignation, settled resentments, below the surface seething.

C. Yelling is usually an outward manifestation of anger.

1. Anger is a lack of self-control, and yelling announces that lack to the world.
2. People with authority don't need to yell, so parents and teachers demonstrate that they have lost their authority when they start yelling.

E. Slander is speaking ill of others or insulting them.

F. Malice is wishing ill to others or delighting in those bad things when they happen.

1. It's possible that the five nouns are progressive stages of nastiness: internal resentment (bitterness), initial explosion (wrath), prolonged indignation (anger), shouting matches (clamor), insults (slander), all accompanied by ill-will (malice).
2. Even if this progression was not in Paul's mind, we can recognize in our lives.
3. In order to put off all nastiness, it's better to nip bitterness in the bud.

II. PUT ON GRACIOUSNESS – 32a

- A. The first word was a favorite with early Greek-speaking Christians, because it is one letter away from the word for Christ (and is pronounced the same in modern Greek).

1. It means good, kind, benevolent and refers to God's kindness – Luke 6:35 (956).
2. It especially refers to God's kindness to believers in Christ – Eph 2:7 (1079).

B. The second word describes one who insides go out to others in compassion.

- C. The third word converts these good emotions into action in the form of forgiveness.
1. The word often means to grant a favor, but Paul used it with a specialized meaning with reference to gracing someone who has sinned against us – Col 2:13 (1090).
 2. Forgiveness is denying ourselves the right to retaliate or receive compensation for the harm we have suffered because of others' sins against us.
 3. In this sense, we pay the penalty for someone else's sin, "eating the loss."
 4. It is a commitment to treat the offender as if the offense had never happened.

D. Normally forgiveness should be a transaction with the offender asking for forgiveness and the offended granting it – Luk 17:3-4 (971).

1. However, oftentimes, the offender either doesn't know or doesn't care or is incapable of recognizing error and asking for forgiveness.
2. This situation leaves the Christian in the position of exercising heart forgiveness but never having the privilege of granting it to the offender – Col 3:13a (1088).

ILLUSTRATION forgiving those who burglarized us

III. GOD FORGAVE US – 32b, Col 3:13b

- A. God forgave us in Christ, that is, through Christ or by means of Christ.
1. He did so by paying the penalty himself, absorbing the negative consequences of our sins in himself – I Pet 2:24 (1118).
 2. If we have faith in him, he now treats us as if there we had never sinned but rather been perfectly obedient all along.
- B. This is the reason that Christians must and can forgive, because we are forgiven.
1. If we do not forgive, we show that we ourselves do not have God's forgiveness.
 2. We struggle to forgive, because it is personally costly and seems unfair.
 3. Indeed, it's much better than fair: it's loving, merciful, gracious, even divine.
 4. In another sense, there is fairness about forgiveness and a monstrous unfairness if those who are forgiven by God refuse to forgive others – Mat 18:21-35.

CONCLUSION

All you have to do in order to have opportunities to forgive others is to keep living in relationships with them – spouses, family members, schoolmates, teachers, bosses, employees, neighbors, church members. By the way, you will also be giving them opportunities to forgive you. As people sin against you, they are giving you an opportunity to do something that most clearly demonstrates that you are a Christian.