

Venom: Hans Sennholz on Redistributionism; Causes of Bitterness, Ephesians 4:28-31a

The next three verses are mandates prohibiting certain expressions of bitterness typical to the believers at Ephesus and imploring them to enter into the nine-step recovery program:

Ephesians 4:28 - He [believer involved in criminal arrogance and immoral degeneracy] who stole up to now, from now on stop stealing, but rather begin to work hard, working with your own hands doing what is right, in order that he may have money to share with him who has a need.

It is easy to visualize one person stealing but hard to imagine how this can have a major impact upon the entire scheme of things. For, example our Gross Domestic Product runs into the trillions of dollars. What can the petty theft of one person do to damage such a huge machine such as the U.S. economy? But when we lower the standards for one, we lower them for all. Eventually the values which hold a nation's economic system together begin to erode and eventually collapse from its own corrupted weight.

I'd like to use the illness of our nation's economy, namely, the way our nation raises, manages, and disburses tax dollars, to illustrate Ephesians 4:28. I'd like to draw this illustration from a book written by:

Sennholz, Hans F. Debts and Deficits. Spring Mills: Libertarian Press, Inc., 1987, passim.

Introduction (p. 1): The man who lives above his present circumstances is in great danger of soon living much beneath them. The same is true with a group of people called "society." To live beyond its means is to invite poverty and deprivation in the end. As wasteful spending may cause a person to fall into poverty, misery, and even disgrace, so does deficit spending minister to all sorts of political evil. It consumes substance and wealth, engages in mass deceit about economic reality, sets a poor example to others, makes people dependent and subservient, causes uncertainty and instability, and breeds social conflict and strife.

Every day, we either improve our material well-being through saving, or reduce it through overconsumption. Businessmen either form capital through reinvestment of their earnings, or dissipate it through losses or overconsumption. Every day, economic conditions in the U.S. either improve or deteriorate ... depending on our consumption habits relative to our means and circumstances.

*Most people are reluctant to apply this basic principle of economic well-being to their governments. Surely, they are aware of it in their own financial affairs; however, political organizations are believed to be endowed with mysterious powers surpassing or negating this economic principle. The belief in such powers derives strength and support from the material benefits with many people gain from government and its redistributive programs. [NOTE: This is what Frederic Bastiat refers to in his book *The Law* as "legal plunder."]*

From their very beginning, the redistribution policies of the U.S. government have consumed productive capital on a massive scale.

From **chapter 2: "Income by Majority Vote" (pp. 23ff):**

Entitlements for Seniors. While the elderly comprises 12 percent of the total U.S. population, they receive some 30 percent of federal budget outlays and more than 40 percent of the federal tax revenues.

Assistance to Students. In 1956, fewer than 3 million students attended colleges and universities; in 1966, the number had doubled. By 1986, it had doubled again, soaring to an estimated 12 million of whom 9.5 million were enrolled in government institutions.

The American people, and their policy makers in Washington, apparently are committed to the idea of a universal college education for all. To undertake such a commitment, government must allocate the resources necessary to impart the education. Once again, it must call upon judges, tax collectors and sheriffs to collect income and wealth from some people so that others may benefit.

To make a college education available to all is to adjust the standard of quality to all, which is the lowest common denominator. The college degree merely takes the place of the high school diploma.

Help for the Needy. *The voice of the people, we are told, calls for redistribution of income and wealth on a massive scale. It calls for the federal government to tax and restrain productive people, and promote others who are deemed to be truly in need. Government is to be the transfer agency, transferring income from the relatively well-to-do to the relatively poor.*

Subsidies for Farmers. At present, [subsidies cost] American taxpayers more than \$28 billion per year and American consumers even more, through planting restrictions and output limitations, through giveaways and subsidized sales to foreigners, or just through storage that causes the supplies to rot in government silos and warehouses.

From Chapter 3: “The Ethics of Entitlement” (pp. 43ff):

It was not always the function of government to take income and wealth from its wealthy citizenry and confer entitlements on others. The U.S. government assumed the task only two generations ago, when Congress introduced progressive taxation and, soon thereafter, launched systems of old age insurance and unemployment compensation. Since then, social pressure, sustained by strong moral emotion, has caused all administrations to pursue the ideal of an equal distribution of goods.

The “ethics of entitlement” have two major objectives:

Removal of want. *A man has a moral obligation to help his unfortunate fellow men. To be a helper indeed is to lend a friendly hand to a needy person; it is personal effort and sacrifice.*

The advocates of redistribution pin their faith to politics and labor unions ... calling for the redistribution of surplus wealth.

Equalization of incomes. *Many redistributionists favor progressive taxation because they are more concerned about the inequalities of income and wealth than the alleviation of poverty. It is highly improper and unjust, they argue, that some people have less than is necessary, while others have so much more. This is why many redistributionists favor a floor beneath which no one should be left and a ceiling above which no one should be permitted to rise.*

Redistribution ideology ... divides society into two social classes: the beneficiaries of transfer, who are ever calling for more; and the victims, who submit unwillingly. It could hardly fail to injure social peace and harmony.

From Chapter 11: “Eternal Hope: A Moral Standard” (pp. 163-64):

He who reforms himself is doing much to reform others. Reform, like charity, must begin at home. Once accomplished at home, it will radiate outward, kindle new light, and spread in geometric proportion. The true reformer is a seminal reformer, not a radical. He does not pass laws that mandate the reformation of others. He himself makes a beginning and does not think of himself as a reformer. The world may reject him as odd, impractical, and even irrational; but he clings to his principles, regardless of the world around him. There is boldness, a spirit of daring, in the heart of the reformer.

Significant reforms, in the final analysis, are moral reforms, changes in the perception of right conduct. Certain moral standards are basic to social order. They may not change much from one generation to the next. Other standards may undergo visible changes in the span of one generation or two, such as individual independence and self-reliance; the ethos of labor; thrift, honesty; and integrity; and respect for private property.

Changes in these standards lead to changes in the system of economic and social organization. In this century, they sowed the seeds of economic and social conflict, and paved the way for political intervention in our lives. They gave birth to a transfer and entitlement system that is eroding the private property order. A reform that would restore it and remove the transfer predilection would have to restore the harmony of interests and repair the moral standards. It would have to rebuild the economic order on the old foundation of the Eighth Commandment—You shall not steal—and of the Tenth—You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor's.

Ephesians 4:28 - He [the believer involved in criminal arrogance and immoral degeneracy] who stole up to now, from now on stop stealing, but rather begin to work hard, working with your own hands doing what is right, in order that he may have money to share with him who has a need.

Ephesians 4:29 - Do not permit any false doctrine to proceed from your mouth but whatever is good of intrinsic value for the purpose of edification, in order that this accurate teaching may give grace orientation to the hearers.

Ephesians 4:30 - Furthermore, stop grieving the Holy Spirit, the God by whom you have been sealed to the day of redemption [the rapture of the church].

Ephesians 4:31

In verse 31 we see the result of permitting unresolved anger to go unconfessed. The chronic sin which results introduces the verse. We have the nominative singular of: πικρία + the noun πικρία, *pikria* - “all bitterness.”

Friedrich, Gerhard. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Vol. 6. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968; p. 125:

In Ephesians 4:31 *pikria* stands at the head of a short list of vices. It is followed immediately by *thumos* and *orge*. Hence, it does not mean “*embitterment*” which involves withdrawal and isolation but “*bitterness,*” “*resentment,*” “*an incensed and angry attitude of mind*” to one’s neighbor.

This describes a chronic sin which lies hidden inside the soul. It is much like the smoldering embers of a fire covered by a thin layer of ashes. The fire may appear to be out but woe to the person who unknowingly touches one of the embers. You touch an ember when you unwittingly become the fuel which provides the trigger for an explosion of *thumos*.

Bitterness thus lies smoldering, hidden from the casual observer but very much alive in the soul of the fragmented believer. Bitterness involves an intense suffering of soul and body. This suffering is the result of something the individual believes is too difficult to bear and thus becomes the source of animosity, resentment, and hostility towards someone, something, a set of circumstances, authority figures or systems.

Other chronic sins which develop in association with this are vindictiveness, implacability, hatred, self-pity, revenge motivation, and revenge function.

The Scripture indicates that there are a number of things which cause bitterness:

- a. Women become bitter when they learn they cannot have children. Samuel's mother was barren prior to his birth and she was bitter about it.

1 Samuel 1:10 - Hannah, greatly distressed, prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly.

- b. When children grow up and go astray, mothers often become bitter about their child's reversionistic lifestyle.

Proverbs 17:25 - A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who gave him birth.

- c. Nations in decline have an increasing amount of bitterness developing within a population of angry people.

Ezekiel 27:31 - They will weep for you [citizens of Tyre] in bitterness of soul with bitter mourning.

- d. The fall of a Client Nation always has as one of its contributing factors the presence of bitterness.

Isaiah 33:7 - Behold, their brave men cry in the streets [the soldiers of the defeated army]. The ambassadors of peace [the politicians whose decisions resulted in a poorly trained and equipped military] weep bitterly.

- e. We have learned from the Jews of the Exodus generation that slavery causes bitterness.

Exodus 1:14 - The Egyptians made the Jews' lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor ... which they imposed upon them.

- f. The reversionist is made bitter by ridicule but in his arrogance blames God for it.

Lamentations 3:14 - I have become a laughingstock to all my people, they ridicule me in song all day.

Lamentations 3:15 - God has filled me with bitterness ...

- g. Degenerate people are filled with bitterness.

Romans 3:13 - Their throat is an open grave and with their tongues they keep deceiving. The poison of cobras is under their lips;

Romans 3:14 - whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

Bitterness expresses itself through several antisocial, asocial, and sociopathic ways:

- a. through selfish inconsideration of others;
- b. withdrawal from society;
- c. indifference and insensitivity towards others;
- d. active rejection of one's society and culture;
- e. noncompliance with commonly accepted and widely practiced establishment standards.

The bitter person knows in his own soul that he is bitter but under the three arrogant skills he is determined to prove he is right.

Proverbs 14:10 - The stream of consciousness knows its own bitterness.

Such a person deceives himself and has facilitated a lifestyle of lying to himself and others. Bitter people live a lie.

James 3:14 - If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your stream of consciousness, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

Recovery from bitterness is the same as for any reversionistic lifestyle. You must start with rebound and then without delay move forward with the other eight steps of the nine-step program for reversion recovery.

Isaiah 38:17 - For my own welfare I had great bitterness. It is You who have kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back.