



Malignity: assuming the worst of others--a brief word study.

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*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge,
God gave them over to a reprobate mind,
to do those things which are not convenient;
Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness;
full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, **malignity**; whisperers,
Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:
Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death,
not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*

Romans 1:28-32 KJV

This little word, **malignity**, came to my attention originally when we were studying the connection between these verses from Romans and the Proverbs 6: 16-19 verses below:

¹⁶ *These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:¹⁷*

A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

¹⁸ *An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,*

¹⁹ *A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.*

Then, it arose again in the course of studying the connection between [passive aggressive behavior with Scriptural terms](#). I had never really quite confirmed the specific nature of its meaning, other than to recognize the connection with being malicious or hateful. I have come to see it in a very specific way now and hope to bring it into the light to assist others!

RSV, ASV and WEB all confirm this is the only verse in which this word "malignity" is used. There do not appear to be any specific Hebrew or Aramaic words to link with it although as noted below a connection is seen with "evil" in the Apocrypha.

It is Strong's #G 2550 and the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia has this to offer:

Malice, Malignity:

mal'-is, ma-lig'-ni-ti (kakia, poneros, kakoetheia): "Malice," now used in the **sense of deliberate ill-will**, by its derivation means badness, or wickedness generally, and was so used in Older English. In the Apocrypha it is the translation of kakia, "evil," "badness" (The Wisdom of Solomon 12:10,20; 16:14; 2 Macc 4:50, the Revised Version (British and American) "wickedness"); in Ecclesiasticus 27:30; 28:7, we have "malice" in the more restricted sense as the translation of menis, "confirmed anger." In the New Testament "malice" and

"maliciousness" are the translation of kakia ([Ro 1:29](#); [1Co 5:8](#); [14:20](#); [Col 3:8](#)); malicious is the translation of poneros, "evil" ([3 Joh 1:10](#), the Revised Version (British and American) "wicked"); it also occurs in Additions to Esther 13:4,7, verse 4, "malignant"; The Wisdom of [Solomon 1:4](#), the Revised Version (British and American) that deviseth evil"; 2 Macc 5:23; malignity occurs in [Ro 1:29](#) as the translation of kakoetheia, "evil disposition"; "maliciously," Susanna verses 43,62; 2 Macc 14:11, the Revised Version (British and American) **"having ill will."**

Vine's Expository Dictionary also included the sense of having ill will, and interpreting things in the worst possible light.

Malignity:

lit., "bad manner or character" (*kakos*, "bad," *ethos*, "manner"), hence, "an evil disposition" that **tends to put the worst construction on everything**, "malice, malevolence, craftiness," occurs in [Rom 1:29](#), as the accompaniment of *dolos*, "guile."

At a time when Believers are struggling to maintain unity with one another, and withstand the onslaught of evil in the culture, this behavior associated with malignity is crucial to address. The other characteristics listed in Sha'ul's warning to the Romans may be generally viewed as more "outward" and observable. This one however, is subtle and inward.

For many years now, we in SAM have considered the meaning of the well-known phrase: "Peace on earth. Good will toward men." We have spoken for some time of having "good will" toward one another as being necessary to our well-being. For us, this has meant that we relate to one another as best we can out of the heart knowledge we have of one another. We know that our hearts are good and looking toward Messiah though we are still a work in progress and sometimes fall. Practically speaking this means that if something is said or done that does not seem to be of good will, we choose to go back to consider the heart we know and check it out with the person first, **from that perspective**, before coming to any negative conclusions. We have considered this "behaving with good will toward men." When it is not practiced, all manner of misunderstandings can grow up and become very damaging!

In the term and behavior of malignity, we see this powerful force that Sha'ul warned not to enter into is exactly the same issue. To assume the worst of others first, and respond or act accordingly to that, is indeed malignant.

For those who have read any of the [Messy Expectations series](#), you may recognize how this failure to assume the best, and instead assume the worst of others plays right into the various kinds of strife that riddle our Messianic fellowship groups. There is also a piece in this series, dealing specifically with what we've called "Internal Resistance" which details an incident in which "ill will" was leading toward division, until the source of it was recognized and renounced. Indeed, it was malignity!

We have come to understand that this malignity can arise from our flesh, from the world system and/or from the enemy of our souls, the adversary. It must be addressed in order to allow His people to function together in shalom! Unchecked, it will destroy a community.

May I suggest that you consider the import of this behavior and begin to address it in your family and your fellowship groups? Once the light of Truth shines in a dark place, it will begin to lose its power to divide!

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