

21. THINGS TO PUT OFF AND PUT ON

(SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2020)

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 63:7-14; Eph. 4:25-5:2

INTRODUCTION

I commented last week on how accurate the Bible is in describing what we know as total depravity as we looked at Eph. 4:17-19.

We also must consider how accurate the Bible is in describing the behavior of God's people who are part of Christian churches.

The reality is that so often we fail in living as we are called.

Now we find our ultimate assurance about life and God's work in who He is not in what we see.

Jesus Christ we know will build His church; the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

However, we know this does not mean that individual congregations are not judged and removed.

This is especially where we consider the words of warning, blessing, and judgment given to the 7 churches in Rev. 2 and 3.

To each of the churches you have the words:

Rev. 2:7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches..."

Paul in our text speaks of not grieving the Holy Spirit of God. We must take very seriously the words that we find in Scripture that are given to professing believers and local churches.

This is not an exercise in making ourselves feel good.

We must hear and submit to God's authority and rest in His grace alone.

We are starting today with Eph. 4:25 and following.

This section extends all the way to almost the end of the book, to Eph. 6:20.

As one commentator describes it, Eph. 4:25-6:20 serves as a commentary on 4:17-24, our text from last week.¹

In the first unit (4:25-5:2), we see that which must be put off and what is to be put on.

Because of length we will look at this unit 4:25-5:2 in two sermons. Today we will focus on verses 25-30. Next week we will conclude this section.

Beware and reject that which destroys true fellowship; promote that which builds up God's people.

There are five things that we will consider in verses 25-30.

1) PUTTING AWAY LYING, SPEAK TRUTH, VERSE 25

Last week, we noted three key verbs in verses 22, 23, and 24 – put off, be renewed, and put on.

Here starting with verse 25, we find the verb **putting away**, which is the same verb, **put off**, in verse 22.

A similar use of the verb is found in Col. 3:8.

Col. 3:8 But now you yourselves are to **put off** all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

You are called put away **falsehood** or **lying**.

I don't know that we should seek to decipher why Paul began this listing with truth rather than one of the other issues, but certainly **truth** is at the heart of God's work of redemption.

Paul's words in Col. 3:9 and 10 parallel very well what we have in Ephesians.

¹ Klyne Snodgrass, 247.

Col. 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, **10** and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

There are several OT connections that are made in the verses that we consider today.

The first comes from **Zech. 8:16**.

The context of Zech. 8 is that of God's promised restoration and work. There were times of judgment and punishment for Israel.

Times of blessing would also come.

In response to this God's people were to speak truth with each other.

The context of Zech. 8, though not identical to Eph. 4, fits very well with the theme.

And then we must not miss the end of verse 25, **for we are members of one another**.

Throughout this section you find things you are not to do, things you must do, and **reasons**.

Here is a very clear reason why truth must characterize us. We are together part of the body of Christ.

Chrysostom (349-407) said this:

"If the eye sees a serpent, does it deceive the foot? if the tongue tastes what is bitter, does it deceive the stomach?"²

Imagine if your body deceived itself.

I guess this happens with disease and failure; it's not a good place to be.

How much worse when there is deception and falsehood among the body of Christ.

2) WATCH OUT FOR ANGER AND THE DEVIL, VERSES 26-27

² Cited by Foulkes, 139.

As we study this part of Ephesians, we observe that these commands are almost like a bullet-list.

There is not a great deal of explanation, and for the most part there does not need to be. In this case, we could wish to have a little more explanation. Why do I say this?

The reason is there are different interpretations for what Paul is saying in verses 26 and 27.

Is Paul warning about anger or saying righteous anger is needed to deal with sin?

For example, the NET Bible, which generally speaking gives sober but brief commentary states:

Christians are to exercise a righteous indignation over sin in the midst of the believing community... “Entirely opposite of the ‘introspective conscience’ view, this text seems to be a shorthand expression for church discipline, suggesting that there is a biblical warrant for δικαία ὀργή [*dikaia orge*] (as the Greeks put it) – righteous indignation.”³

This argument is not frivolous; it bears consideration.

However, four different commentaries that I regularly consult, suggest this is not the meaning of these verses.

Now, there is certainly a place for righteous anger.

Anger can be a destructive force, which I think is what Scripture is warning about here.

Lack of righteous anger is also a problem for individuals and churches.

We can be too passive in the face of evil and sin.

John Calvin commented here:

We comply with this injunction, if the objects of our anger are sought, not in others, but in ourselves, – if we pour out our indignation against our own faults. With respect to others, we ought to be angry, not at their persons, but at their faults; nor ought we to be excited to anger by private offenses, but by zeal for the glory of the

³ W. Hall Harris, eds. *The NET Bible Notes*. 1st, Accordance electronic ed. (Richardson: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), s.v. Eph. 4:26.

Lord. Lastly, our anger, after a reasonable time, ought to be allowed to subside, without mixing itself with the violence of carnal passions.

What John Calvin states here is what other modern commentators also suggest and fits well with the end of verse 26, **do not let the sun go down on your wrath.**

This phrase has a connection with Psalm 4, but it is not an exact quotation certainly.

And then verse 27 speaks of **not giving a place to the devil.**

This is a serious warning. Sinful anger, especially when it is allowed to persist, gives an opening for the work of the devil, the Slanderer, to carry out his evil work.

3) FROM THIEF TO PHILANTHROPIST, V. 28

Given that this letter was written to more than just the congregation in Ephesus, we do have to be careful about assessing the first readers of this letter.

Were some of these first readers thieves before they came to saving faith?

That is certainly a possibility.

Just as people today make excuses for theft by saying they are poor, so certainly people in the first century tried to justify their sin based on their need.

Various commentators point out the incredible change that we see in this verse.

There is a beauty to this verse.

The thief is not just to stop stealing.

We are saved not just to turn from sin.

Rather we now live unto righteousness.

The *klepto* is to labor with his hands.

The hands that formerly were used to steal now must be put to work for that which is good and also to give to those who have need.

Isn't this a beautiful picture of the transformation that is the grace of God in Jesus Christ?

Now, of course, this is not just true for the former thief.

We can say, if this is the duty of the former thief, then it certainly is the duty for all believers, that we would work not just for our own needs but to assist others.

Regardless of your past sins, we are called to show the power and grace of our Lord in our lives.

4) ROTTEN VS. GRACIOUS WORDS, VERSE 29

The basic pattern of negative, positive, and reason or goal is what we see also in verse 29.

The negative is **do not let rotten or corrupt words leave your mouth.**

This would include any speech that is unwholesome, whatever that exact form might be.

Rather the focus should be on speech that **builds up.**

The word **edification** here is the same word used in 2:21 (building); 4:12 and 4:16 (edifying).

It is interesting that verse 28 uses the word **need**, give to him who has **need.**

That same word is used also here in verse 29, where it is translated as **necessary.**

Versions don't all agree on how it is translated, but certainly there is a play on words.

You must help those in need with your labor.

You must help those in need with your words.

Verse 29 might then be calling you to **think of those who specifically need encouragement or edification.** Seek in a specific way to edify others.

The last part of verse 29 speaks of giving grace to those who hear.

Though the language is not identical, I think of the encouragement that we find in Hebrews 10:24 and 25.

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, **25** not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

5) DO NOT GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT, v. 30

We have seen several times that the book of Ephesians speaks repeatedly of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The same is true in this section.

We have the Spirit here in verse 30. Then in chapter 5:1, 2 we have mention of the Father [God] and the Son [Christ].

Verse 30 might not be a direct quotation from the OT, but there is a passage from Isaiah 63 that we read earlier that is very similar.

Isaiah 63:7 begins a new section in the chapter. It speaks of God's abundant mercy to Israel. He became their Savior. Then in verse 10 speaks of Israel's continued rebellion.

Is. 63:10 But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit;
So He turned Himself against them as an enemy,
And He fought against them.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the message, seven times in Rev. 2 and 3 we find the admonition:

Rev. 2:7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

We don't know precisely why the Holy Spirit is mentioned here specifically in verse 30, but let me give several reasons why it fits well here.

First, it is a reminder that Paul is not just sharing life tips or suggestions to help people get along.

No, Paul's message is not the thought of man, **but the command of God.**

Second, we are reminded here that the Holy Spirit's work is not just to sanctify us individually but to shape us also corporately.

Third, the Spirit's work is connected with truth.

The opening verse focuses on truth, verse 25.

There is a sense where we can see all of these verses as connected with truth and dealing properly and honestly with others.

We grieve or insult the Holy Spirit when we do not follow the clear instruction that is given here.

You offend the Holy Spirit when you do not live a in terms of the great day of Redemption that the Spirit guarantees for us.

The word sealed in verse 30 is the same word used in Eph. 1:13.

Eph. 1:13 In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

CONCLUSION

As I mentioned last week, the Christian life is not self-help or self-improvement.

The call of this text is not simply turn from sin.

The call of this text is to live in terms of the gracious work that we know in Jesus Christ and sealing work of the Holy Spirit.

Praise and Thankfulness – God is merciful, He forgives, and He is holy and just. He knows how we must live.

Reflection – what specifically from this passage might be something that you need to especially consider?

Beware and reject that which destroys true fellowship; promote that which builds up God's people.

Prayer

Closing Hymn: 476

Benediction: 2 Peter 3:17-18

You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;
but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.