

**Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4**

**“25 Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another. 26 “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil. 28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. 29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”**

# **“Grieve Not the Holy Spirit”**

**As we come to the conclusion of chapter four, we find the Apostle Paul giving us two choices as Christians:**

- We can put on the new man and walk with Christ...**
- Or we can continue to walk as if we were still in the old man grieving the Spirit of God.**

**Last week we considered what it meant to put on the New Man & this week we learn how to not grieve the Holy Spirit! As we do so we must remember that Paul is speaking to Christians:**

**As I pointed out last week, many of you here were baptized into Christ before you could speak and yet you are now members of the Body of Christ. Those of us who came later in life also know that we would NOT have made such a choice if left to ourselves.**

- In both cases we are to see the work of the Spirit and claim the promises of God that He will keep us and protect us!**
- And in both cases we are always choosing whether to put on the new man or to grieve the Spirit of God.**

**This is why Paul says at verse 20:**

**“But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:**

- Those who are in Christ are those who can hear Jesus? Those who have been born again by the Spirit’s work in their heart!**

**22 “that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”**

- What we must face now is the fact that even as new men we can grieve the Holy Spirit!**
- It begins with not doing what the Apostle commands new men to do!**

**Ephesians 4: “25b “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another.**

- We are to be a truthful people!**
- If we lie or deceive our neighbors it grieves the Holy Spirit.**

**26 “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil.”**

- We are a righteous people who are careful to avoid prolonged anger! Holding on to a grudge grieves the Holy Spirit!**

28 “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

- We are to be a changed people and changed for the better:  
Rather than steal from others we become productive and are then able to give to those in need.
- Continuing in old habits or just being what the Proverbs refers to as a sluggard grieves the Holy Spirit!

29 “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

- We are those who build others up rather than tear them down!
- Yes, tearing down is easier, but again it grieves the Holy Spirit.

When Paul speaks of corrupt words here it is not just curse words that he has in mind, but anything that fails to have the other person’s interest at heart.

Especially in our age of mass communication, this is especially challenging. Yes we should avoid the crass and childish things that others engage in, but just what is a corrupt word when it come to the edification of the hearers? Should we take care to never offend someone? If we did that we would never properly share the Gospel because it must include the bad news which folks do not want to hear.

As always, I encourage people to spend LOTS of time in the Gospel accounts.

- There in the life of Jesus we learn what our speech should be like!

At times we find Him saying ‘go and sin no more’ when the legalists thought He should be judging a sinner. But at other times saying to the respected religious leaders of the day they are “like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.”

- Obviously learning to speak as new men rather than as old men requires discernment and wisdom.
- Yes, there will be times that we grieve the Holy Spirit and such times require repentance!

And not using corrupt language ties in very closely with the Apostle’s next admonition...

32 “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

I plan to speak more about forgiveness next Lord’s Day but here Paul tells us to be kind and tenderhearted. Was Jesus being kind when He pronounced the seven woes to the Pharisees & Sadducees in Matthew 23? Was He being tender hearted when he told the rich young ruler to sell all that he had, knowing it would devastate the man who loved his possessions?

Of course the Son of God was being both kind and tenderhearted and it should remind us about the high standard He sets for us.

- This is why we can spend our entire life going over and over how He acted learning more each and every year!

And that is important because we have to now face these chilling verses in our morning text...

30 “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.”

- Not only do we have to practice those things we have considered last week and this morning but there are now things we must clearly avoid.

And we need to understand this thought of grieving the Holy Spirit on two very important levels...

- Remember again that Paul is speaking to us as members of the Body of Christ...

We are not speaking about things that can cost us our salvation, but how we live our new life in a real world!

- The first aspect of grieving the Spirit is to remember that He is the Third Person of the Trinity and as such He can truly be grieved!

Just because we know that God is taking history where He wants it to go does not mean He is not involved in the story of history. We often remember the suffering of Jesus on the cross as the penalty for our sins, but there are other real emotional times for God as the story of salvation is played out.

Think of what Jesus said as He approached Jerusalem for the last time: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” [Matthew 22:37]

So no, we cannot thwart the work of God anymore than those disobedient Jews could prevent the coming of Messiah...

- But we can grieve the heart of God by our actions, just as a child can disappoint a parent who still loves them but is hurt nonetheless.

And again we learn from the ministry of Jesus that such faithless actions can also impact the very work of God, though not in an ultimate sense, but real nonetheless for those involved. In Matthew 13 we find Jesus returning to His home town with this chilling reminder...

“54 When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, “Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? 55 Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? 56 And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?” 57 So they were offended at Him.

- Or as we might say today, just WHO does He think He is?

But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house. 58 Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”

Again the work & ministry of Jesus was carried out as the Lamb of God Who came to save His people from their sins, but there were folks there in Nazareth who were not healed or continued to suffer demon possession because of their unbelief! So, when we consider what the Apostle wants us to avoid so we do NOT grieve the Holy Spirit we should pay special attention...

- Because we do not want to bring sorrow to the heart of God nor do we want to miss any of His blessings!

At verse 30 the Apostle tells us to avoid grieving the Holy Spirit by letting all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from us, along with all malice.

So the first question is just how much of these actions are to be put away?

- That’s right ALL!

First up is bitterness: What must be put away? Are we allowed to be bitterly disappointed by some thing or some one? Well, was Jesus disappointed in His people when He entered Jerusalem?

Yes, He was but He obviously did not become a bitter person or allow a root of bitterness to rise up in His heart even with those wicked actions.

He went on to suffer & die for them even crying out Father forgive them for they know not what they do.

- Our reactions might well have been, hey, they knew exactly what they were doing and their failures deserve God’s very judgment!

That was true in the end for some of them but that is always left in God's hand and not ours! This is why James reminded us at James 4:12, "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?"

Next up are wrath & anger which of course are closely related:

Wrath is found almost two hundred times in the Scriptures and almost exclusively we find it referring to God's wrath! The wrath of man is almost always negative except for the actions of a King and thus we should clearly avoid it!

The wisdom of Proverbs says at 29:8 "Scoffers set a city aflame, But wise men turn away wrath."

Anger is more like bitterness where there are times that righteous anger is appropriate, but remember that the Apostle just told us to not let the sun set on our anger. Unresolved anger will lead to rash actions and bitter hearts so we strive to be angry and sin not!

- If your anger cannot be resolved then the problem more likely lies in your own heart rather than the actions of other people or events.

That leaves us with clamor, evil speaking and malice." I guess in our modern age clamor would be when we put the caps-lock on to make sure folks hear what we are typing! In a group, the clamor is the one speaking the loudest to drown out the other voices. And we should avoid such things because most folks will not hear us but rather be thinking of that famous line from Shakespeare, "me thinks the woman protests too much!"

Evil speaking certainly includes crass language or blasphemy which we all know should be put away from a Christian! But it also includes how we speak about others who are made in the Image of God. Our Heidelberg Catechism is helpful here because when it deals with the 9th Commandment it includes not only the obvious prohibition of bearing false witness, but also what the Command requires in the answer to question 112...

"That I never give false testimony against anyone, twist no one's words, not gossip or slander, nor join in condemning anyone rashly or without a hearing. Rather, in court and everywhere else, I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind; these are the very devices the devil uses, and they would call down on me God's intense wrath. I should love the truth, speak it candidly, and openly acknowledge it. And I should do what I can to guard & advance my neighbor's good name."

- At bottom we can put away evil speaking by filling our lives with good edifying speech!

And the final thing to avoid or put away is malice. Malice is just the opposite of what we just read from the Catechism, so it is clearly one to avoid at all cost: There is no such thing as justified malice!

Now you can see why forgiveness needs to have an entire sermon, and we will take that up next week.

But I trust we will all take these admonitions from the Apostle Paul seriously so that we can be encouraged to walk as new men and women and avoid grieving the Spirit of God!

Communion Meditation: Ester 7

"6 And Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!" So Haman was terrified before the king and queen. 7 Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. 8 When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, "Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house?"

As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. 9 Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, "Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman." Then the king said, "Hang him on it!"

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided.