

**Ephesians 4: 25-30; “To Be Pleasing to the Spirit”, Message # 36 in a series entitled – “The Greatness of His Power”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, in the Morning Worship Service.**

In this message I want to bring to your attention, that the object towards which you should strive in living your Christian life to the glory of God, is that you should strive not to grieve the Holy Spirit as Paul says in verse 30. I do not simply want to think of this negatively. Rather I want to bring out the truth conversely. That is, not grieving the Holy Spirit will mean that you will strive to live out the life of Christ within you, deliberately trying to please the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. The Holy Spirit is Christ in You, the hope of glory. The Holy Spirit is leading you into all the truth of God’s word. So then, to learn what is pleasing to the Lord is the essence of the Christian life.

Since this is the case I would like us to think together about the specifics of what it means to please the Lord, the Holy Spirit according to these verses. Here in these verses, we learn that in order not to grieve the Spirit, but to please Him and to be blessed by Him in what you are doing day by day, you will have to 1<sup>st</sup> of all – Put away certain things. Specifically lying and corrupt words. (verses 25 & 29) And 2<sup>nd</sup> – You have to learn to exhibit new and holy passions, and to refrain from the old ones. (verses 26-28) Let’s consider these things now, in greater detail.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – To be pleasing to the Lord, the Holy Spirit you have to learn to speak righteously.**

Verse 25 – “Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another.” The implication here is that if you have had the bad habit of not exactly speaking the truth in the past, before you were saved, that you will not continue on, doing that now, now that you know the Lord. You will put away lying. It is a most important thing, that you do not misrepresent or exaggerate the truth concerning yourself or others, or the Lord Himself. In the Bible we find the absolute truth in written form. And so when you are converted to Christ, you are in a very real sense, pledging to God and to Christ, that you will hold fast to the truth. Your are pledging that you will speak the speak the truth to other people around you in a righteous way.

We saw this before in Ephesians 4: 14 and 15 – “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ.” We saw that it is by speaking truth with each other that we grow up into Christ. To put away lying, therefore, you must come to understand that you are not called to be cunning or crafty in relation to the truth of the word of God, to people around you. Rather, you are to speak the truth in love to them. This begins with the doctrinal truth of the Bible, and it continues with all of your conversations with every single person who you come into contact with every day.

In speaking to people you ought to consider how important it is to speak to them straightforwardly. You should speak to them plainly and accurately concerning what you know is the truth of the matter in regard to things that have taken place in your own thoughts and your experience. In this straightforward way, you should speak to them of how you perceive matters of importance to them, and to yourself. If you are sensitive to the Spirit’s leading you will speak wisely. Think of what it says in Psalm 37, verses 30 and 31 – “The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of justice.” “The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.” So the mouth of a righteous person speaks wisely. Wisdom is the right application of Biblical knowledge. The Christian will talk of justice. You will talk about what is right and wrong, and about how God expects us to think and to act.

Look at Proverbs chapter 14, verses 5-8. “A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness will utter lies.” “A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not find it, but knowledge is easy to him who understands.” “Go from the presence of foolish man, when you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge.” “The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of fools is deceit.” So we see here that being a good witness is speaking the truth about what you have seen and heard

in a particular situation concerning what another person has done, or what you have done. Being a false witness against your neighbor is breaking the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment of the 10 commandments.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” (Deuteronomy 5: 20) It is also summed up in the 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commandment – “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” A false witness will utter lies, but a faithful witness will not lie. People who are scoffers, they might think that they are wise, but they have not found it. This is because they do not think about what God thinks of their speech. Rather, they only think about the impression they make on other people. These people who they are trying to please and to impress, they usually do not know the Lord.

On the other hand, the knowledge of speaking what is right is easy to him who has the understanding of the Bible in their mind and their heart. They know that God will bless them greatly when they speak the truth. Fools, those who do not know God, people who deny God, they pursue folly. Or they go about to say things or do things in a deceitful way. But a prudent person understands his own way. He guards himself against lying by thinking about his own heart, and whether he is reasoning correctly according to the Bible. The reason is also given here as to why we should put away lying, and why we should speak the truth. It is because we are members of one another. We are, as Christians, members of the same spiritual body, the body of Christ, His church.

Each of us who is a Christian has the Holy Spirit in our life. Each of us is a member in the same spiritual family. Each of us therefore should be very conscious of the fact that since we belong to Christ, we belong to each other. Therefore, we ought to think of how we can build each other up in the faith, how we can edify one another. Colossians 3, verses 8-11. “But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.” “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the Old Man with his deeds, and have put on the New Man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where they is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”

Ephesians chapter 4, verse 29 also shows us the right way for a Christian to proceed in their speech – “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” It is necessary, in terms of your learning to build another person up, to think about what kind of words are coming out of your mouth. Think of what would build a brother or a sister up, and not frustrate them or tear them down? Think of how grace might be imparted to the one who is listening to your words. Proverbs 25: 11-13 – “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.” “Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear.” “Like the cold of snow in time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him, for he refreshes the soul of his masters.”

I hope that you are beginning to see that there is a real and definite difference between the corrupt words which can proceed from your mouth, and those which would edify a brother or sister. Words fitly spoken are attractive and they win the person who you are trying to speak to, to the truth. They are like apples of gold in settings of silver. They are like fine jewelry to the eye; even more so, to the mind and heart. Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold, is even a wise rebuker to an obedient ear. So, you see here, that there are many times, with brethren who are near to us, they may need a wise rebuke. Reproofs for discipline are a way of life to the Christian. A wise rebuke will not be harsh or hard to bear to one who is sincerely trying to do the will of God and live the Christian life to the glory of God.

They will actually be like the cold of snow in the time of harvest if they come from your lips as a faithful messenger. It will refresh the soul of even those in authority over you, or those over you in business that you are in, if those people are Christians. If the things that you say are said in the right way, if you are a faithful to God’s word, and you are bearing the good tidings of your own prudence and discretion in the words that you bring, it will refresh the heart of the one you are speaking to. Let us determine to be thoughtful with the words that we use, that we might edify others also.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – To be pleasing to the Spirit you have to learn to exhibit new holy passions, and to refrain from the old ones.** (verses 26-28)

In this case it is being angry in the wrong way, and stealing. “Be angry and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.” “Let him who steals, 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 told here by the apostle Paul that it is good for the Christian to be angry about some things. What are those things?

Well, we have a holy example given to us by our Lord over to Mark chapter 3, verses 1-6. “And Jesus entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand.” “So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.” “And He said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Step forward.’” “Then He said to them, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do evil, to save life or to kill?’” “But they kept silent.” “And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’” “And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.” “Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.”

So we see here that the Lord Jesus, who was perfect, pure, and holy at every point in His life, was being watched by these sinful men to see whether He would heal a man on the Sabbath. As they thought that there was something wrong with this; as they thought that it was unlawful work on the Lord’s Day, they entirely disapproved of Jesus’ healing this man. The Son of Man was Lord of the Sabbath. And so He rightly asked them the question – Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do evil, to save life, or to kill? But they kept sinfully silent, because they should have instantly spoken up and said that it was good.

Instead, they were silent because they thought, wrongly, that it was evil. Jesus then exhibited righteous anger towards these men. He was grieved by the hardness of their hearts. Even so, you and I ought to be grieved and angry at the hardness of people’s hearts around us, people who are quick to take the life of the unborn, and whose passions of sinful self-interest predominate over any thought of what God would want them to do, or how He would want them to think. Jesus immediately went ahead and healed the man. And immediately they went out to plot together of how they might destroy Him.

This anger was not at all a sinful passion in our Lord Jesus, but it was a righteous indignation and a godly anger. He looked at them all in anger without a particle of sin. And you and I may do the same if our cause is God’s righteous cause, and our passions are under His direction according to the word, and under His control by the power of the Holy Spirit.

If you are going to be angry, said the Puritan John Trapp, be angry at nothing but sin. Anger is something that in men must be brief and not long lasting as our text says here. Be angry and yet do not sin, and do not let the sun go down on your anger. Your anger, if righteous, accomplishes a good purpose; to warn sinners around you of God’s judgment, and that you intend to defend the innocent and the righteous. There is a difference between the passionate anger of men in sin and the passionate anger of men who would obey God, follow Christ, and be of righteous and loving help to men. The difference is being zealous for one’s own mindset, will or honor, or being zealous to do God’s will and bring honor and glory to Him in being angry with sin.

James chapter 1, verses 19 and 20 – “So the, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” God, because He is perfect, has every right to be angry with sinful men. Indeed, in Psalm 7, verse 11 it says that, “God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.” His righteous anger is on a slow burn and it will culminate at the end of days in the last judgment. And even then it will not terminate, but it will go on and on, forever and ever, upon those who did not repent of their sins and believe in Jesus.

But even the most righteous men, apart from Christ, cannot sustain anger in their spirit very long, until it turns sinful and leads to folly in them. Why is this? It is because we too strongly believe in ourselves and our own judgment in things. And rather than representing God righteously in our anger, we are prone to take our own revenge, and take matters of justice into our own hands, and feel justified in sustaining a continual anger and an unforgiving spirit towards those who we ought to pray for, and seek to be reconciled to. Let not the sun go down on your anger. How easily we forget what we ourselves were once like before we came to Christ. Even as Christians we can sometimes become angry enough to kill someone.

Matthew 5, verses 21-26 – “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ “But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.” “And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council.” “But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.” “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way.” “First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

“Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.” “Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.” Please remember that your spirit is not to be an unrighteously angry spirit. Does your brother have something against you? Go to him and be reconciled before you come to church and give your gift as an offering to God. If there is sin in your spirit against any brother or sister, the Lord will not receive your gift.

Indeed, He will providentially order things so that you will be brought into a prison of sorts in your spirit, until you have paid the very last penny of what you owed Him. And also the brother or sister who you were sinfully angry with. Do not give place to the Devil, and find yourself acting like him, as an accuser of the brethren. The devil likes nothing better than to see brethren unrighteously angry with one another. Do not let him have that pleasure. Let us also think about Paul’s words in verse 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.”

What a great thing it is to labor and work with your hands. As a Christian, you no longer see the need to go around taking things from other people, but you see the value of work. It is the institution of God. God assigned to Adam and Eve in the beginning, before the Fall, that occupation of tilling the ground. He tended and kept that garden and it was a delight to him. It was only when he fell from his original righteousness that he was consigned to work by the sweat of his brow to get bread to eat. But even this can be a delight, when one sees the value which God has placed upon our work.

We should work to the glory of God at what He has given us to do; each and every day. We do this not only to provide for our own needs, but also as Paul says here – that we might have something to give to him who has need.” Even the apostle Paul himself was poor at many points, but he said this in Acts chapter 20, verses 32-35 – “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel.” “Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.” “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak.” “And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” If we remember these words we will do well and we will be pleasing to the Lord the Spirit.