

—{1}. Ephesians 4:25-32 . . . . . Grieve or Please?

A. Introduction

1. "and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.'" (Matthew 3:17)
  - a. being pleasing to God: what a thought!
  - b. this summer in our adult Bible class we were looking at God's attributes, the characteristics describing His nature
  - c. we discovered on the one hand that
    - (A) God is holy, totally transcending all His creation
    - (B) God is eternal, existing in His own being outside time
    - (C) God is absolute, unchanging, and sovereign
    - (D) but limiting God to these attributes
      - (1) gives only a caricature of the God of the Bible
      - (2) a God totally unmoved by His created beings
      - (3) how could a person please such a God?
  - d. so we also discovered that our God, the God of the Bible
    - (A) is a personal, caring God
    - (B) that He is a God of love, of mercy, of grace
    - (C) that He is providential, caring for and sustaining His creation – whether inanimate, animate or human
    - (D) we have a God who cares:
      - (1) "In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old." (Isaiah 63:9)
      - (2) we sang that chorus this morning based on 1 Peter 5:7, "casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."
    - (E) caring so much that He sent His only, unique Son into the world to die on the cross in order to save us

- e. This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.
  - f. as God's children, how are we engaged?
    - (A) are we, as the hymn says,  
Living for Jesus a life that is true,  
Striving to please Him in all that I do,
    - (B) or, are we living in a fashion that grieves Him, which is the warning that is embedded in today's passage ...
2. "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30)
- a. we are going to see how this passage as a whole amplifies this verse; that it describes what are the things that grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and, those that please Him
  - b. but first let us put these words in the context of the whole of scripture and in the immediate context
  - c. all of scripture bears out that a radical change is needed in a person before they can please God
    - (A) in keeping with God's promise, "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 36:26)
    - (B) we find fulfilment in John 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name"
    - (C) "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6)
    - (D) now the point of these verses is this: before one can even begin to please God, it is necessary that the life-changing, regenerative act of God take place which is realized or appropriated by faith in the name of Jesus: what is said here is said to Christians
  - d. Ephesians 4:25 begins 'wherefore' or 'therefore' pointing to the context of the immediately preceding verse, 24: "and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."
    - (A) not only are these words addressed to Christians
    - (B) but the commands given are ones that can only be carried out by the new self, the new nature created when we were saved

- (C) these commands are commands of 'righteousness,' or, of right relationship to our fellow man
- (D) these commands are commands of 'holiness,' or, of devoted relationship to God
- (E) and together they are commands of 'righteousness and holiness of truth,' suitable to our newly created nature

e. Ephesians 4:25 says 'for we are members of one another.' pointing out that in a very particular way these commands are to be practised within the body of Christ, the Church

- (A) if we do not keep them privately as brethren in Christ
- (B) how can we keep them publicly before the world?

3. let us scan through these closing verses of Ephesians 4
  - a. first noting the things that grieve the Holy Spirit of God
  - b. then the things that please God

## B. Things that Grieve the Spirit

1. 'the Holy Spirit of God' – His full title is given in verse 30
  - a. reminding us of both His presence and His power
  - b. reminding us that our new self is His holy work
  - c. and reminding that it is by Him we 'were sealed for the day of redemption' – keeping us until we arrive in heaven
  - d. how sad, then, that the child of God grieve this Holy Spirit
2. first, in our speech
  - a. Lying: "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbour, ..." 4:25a
    - (A) fear of punishment leads children into lying which can become a habit – but as children of God, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1 NAS) – so this is no excuse
    - (B) people lie so that others may look on them more favourably (exaggeration, forms of boasting) – but as God's children we are fully accepted by Him in the Beloved.
    - (C) so, take of the cloak of falsehood
  - b. Destructive speech: "Let no unwholesome word {corrupt communication} proceed from your mouth,"

- .....
- (A) words that are rotten, putrid, unhealthy
  - (B) reckless words that hurt those we love. – harsh words
    - (1) 1. Name-calling.
    - (2) 2. Words that wear on the soul.
    - (3) 3. Words that take the heart out of people.
    - (4) 4. Words that overstate the point.
    - (5) 5. Words that rub salt into a wound.
    - (6) 6. Words that communicate personal disgust<sup>{2}</sup>.
- c. 31: 'slander' or 'evil-speaking' (ie., speaking evil of ...)
- (A) Webster: the utterance or spreading of a false statement harmful to another's character or reputation
  - (B) the practice of tearing another person apart in order to build oneself up should not be found in God's people
  - (C) Jim Cymbala welcomes people into the church with words such as these: "And now, I charge you that if you ever hear another member speak an unkind word of criticism or slander against anyone – myself, an usher, a choir member, or anyone else – that you stop that person in mid-sentence and say, 'Excuse me-who hurt you? Who ignored you? Who slighted you? Was it Pastor Cymbala? Let's go to his office right now. He'll apologize to you, and then we'll pray together so God can restore peace to this body. But we won't let you talk critically about people who aren't present to defend themselves.'<sup>{3}</sup> Why? Because slander will destroy a local church body.
- d. and speech such as this grieves the Holy Spirit of God
3. in our attitude
- a. Wrath and Anger: "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity." ..... 4:26-27; also 31
    - (A) there can be righteous anger – Jesus showed that – but all too often it can be self-righteous anger, and the damage is done when it becomes our attitude
      - (1) Aristotle said, "Anybody can become angry--that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way--that is not

easy!"—{4}.

(B) but smouldering anger lets Satan infect the church – There is a parable of the man who sold his house for half price but stipulating that he retain ownership of one nail over the door. One day he wanted to buy the house back but was refused. So he hung the carcass of a dead animal on that nail he still owned. The house became unlivable, and the family was forced to sell the house back to the owner of the nail.—{5}. Anger is a peg whereby Satan can retain his hold upon our life

b. 'Let all bitterness ... be put away from you'

4:31

(A) bitterness can be a festering sore in an individual and in a congregation

(B) whether the cause be envy, or disappointment (that's when a person doesn't get the appointment), or injury

(C) when bitterness enters, a small slight can become an huge impediment, a stumbling block

c. Verse 31 continues: '... along with all malice'

(A) malice – an inner badness that if allowed to prosper gives rise to evil actions

(B) and, though it be part of our old man, in this verse it is demonstrated as subject to the will of the new man

d. and attitudes such as these grieve the Holy Spirit of God

4. in our actions

a. Dishonesty: "He who steals must steal no longer;"

4:28a

(A) I have told you before of the looter in the Los Angeles riots who 'when asked what he had stolen, the man replied, "Gospel tapes. I love Jesus."'—{6}.

(B) On the other hand, Stuart Briscoe relates how in the early 1900's, the evangelist W. P. Nicholson preached so powerfully, the Holy Spirit so convicted the dock workers that they started bringing back so many goods that they had stolen that the authorities had to post a sign, "Will all those attending the meetings of Mr. W. P. Nicholson please stop returning stolen goods. We have nowhere to store them."—{7}.

b. 'Let all ... clamour ... be put away from you'

4:31

(A) you have all known someone like that; propose something in a meeting and they will arise with loud and quarrelsome words to shoot it down

(B) these are the shouters, the haranguers, the arguers

c. and actions such as these grieve the Holy Spirit of God; but, let us turn to the positive

## C. Things that Please the Spirit

### 1. in our speech

a. "Speak truth each one of you with his neighbour"

4:25b

(A) the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth; proclamation of the truth shows His rule in our hearts and in our midst

(B) Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn concluding his Nobel lecture on literature quoted a Russian proverb: "One word of truth outweighs the whole world."—{8}.

b. Constructive speech: "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear."

4:29

(A) destructive and constructive speech are contrasted

(B) as Tim Stafford puts it: 'words can mortify or edify'—{9}.

(C) you have heard THINK before speaking: Alan Redpath once formed a "mutual encouragement" fellowship at a time of stress in one of his pastorates. The members subscribed to a simple formula applied before speaking of any person or subject that was perhaps controversial.

(1) T - Is it true?

(2) H - Is it helpful?

(3) I - Is it inspiring?

(4) N - Is it necessary?

(5) K - Is it kind?

If what we are about to say does not pass these tests, we should keep our mouth shut. It works!—{10}.

c. Forgiving speech: "... forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

4:32c

(A) this is the antidote to anger, bitterness and slander

(B) forgiveness is what cleanses the heart of all the pegs by which Satan would grab hold of us

d. this kind of speech pleases the Holy Spirit of God

### 2. in our attitude

a. 'Be ... tenderhearted'

4:32b

- (A) a tender heart is one that feels the pain when another member of the body is wounded, injured or hurt
- (B) this is the kind of heart that follows Romans 12:10 – “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honour;”
- b. this kind of attitude pleases the Holy Spirit of God

3. in our actions

- a. Work and Share: “... but rather he must labour, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.” 4:28b
  - (A) you have heard people speak of the ‘Protestant work ethic’ – perhaps slightly – but it is not simply work that is in view, but of how it allows you to share
  - (B) John Wesley said this on finances: “Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.” We appear to have concluded that two out of three isn't bad.<sup>-(11)</sup>.
- b. Kindness: ‘Be kind to one another’ 4:32a
- c. these kind of attitudes please the Holy Spirit of God

D. Conclusion

- 1. when you stop and examine all of these things
  - a. you find that they can be folded into the royal law
  - b. “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35 NAS95)
  - c. John Piper: “Imperfect love fulfills the law and pleases the perfection-demanding God “
  - d. our closing hymn, “I Would Be True” is a dedication of ourselves to a life that will please, not grieve, the Holy Spirit of God.

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AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
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NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
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2. “Toxic Talk” by Tim Stafford, Discipleship Journal #86 – Kerux illustration #3055
3. From “Charged not to slander” by Jim Cymbala – Kerux illustration #33285
4. “Holy Anger” from Daily Bread – Kerux illustration #18258
5. “Total Commitment” By Dale A. Hays – Kerux illustration #2070
6. “The Difference Is You” – Kerux illustration #2708
7. “Restitution Shows a Repentant Heart,” Stuart Briscoe – Kerux illustration #3239
8. “The Weight of Truth” by Charles R. Swindoll – Kerux illustration #1614



9. "Can We Talk" by Tim Stafford – Kerux illustration #3817
10. "A Pastor's Mutual Encouragement Fellowship" – Kerux illustration #2635
11. Kerux illustration #872