

DO NOT GRIEVE THE SPIRIT

Dowlan Road, February 22, 2009 AM

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Open your Bible to the book of Ephesians. This great New Testament naturally falls into two sections.
 - 1. In the first three chapters, Paul celebrates the amazing things God has done for us in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3-8).
 - 2. In the three remaining chapters Paul would challenge his audience to line up their behavior with their belief. Because of the great things Christ has done for us, we ought to live for Him – to conduct our lives in a certain way (Ephesians 4:22-24). He challenges us to lay aside the old man of sin and become a whole new person.
 - 3. Not only does he challenge us to do this, but he spells out what exactly will be involved.
 - a. V. 25. We have to stop lying and tell the truth.
 - b. Vs. 26-27. We have to stop committing sin when we are angry.
 - c. V. 28. We have stop stealing and start working.
 - d. V. 29. We must clean up our speech and only speak words which edify.
 - e. Vs. 31-32. We must lay aside all bitterness and be kind to each other.
 - 4. This kind of teaching continues on to the end of the book. This last section is filled with all kinds of very practical instructions about how we are supposed to live.
- B. You may have noticed that I passed over verse 30. So let's go back (v. 30).
 - 1. At first glance, this statement seems odd and out of place. What does this mean? How does this fit with the flow of thought?
 - 2. But when we take a closer look and understand what Paul is really trying to say, we will find that this statement fits perfectly with the context. Remember that Paul is challenging the Ephesians to live in a way that is consistent with what they believe. The instruction he gives would not be easy to follow (anger, speech). Thus, in verse 30 Paul will pause and give his audience three powerful incentives to follow through and be the people God calls them to be.
 - 3. Sometimes we struggle to be the people God wants us to be. Sometimes God's commands are difficult for us to obey – perhaps some on Paul's list. When those moments come, these three incentives can motivate us as well. So let's take a closer look. What are these three incentives? We should live godly lives because...

OUR SIN GRIEVES THE HOLY SPIRIT.

- A. It is sad that the worst thing about sin is the one most people rarely consider.
 - 1. When we think about the grief that results from sin, we are usually thinking about our grief.
 - 2. For example, when man is caught in adultery, he suffers grief. He grieves over shame and embarrassment he is suffering. If his wife leaves, he grieves over that lost companionship. He grieves over the financial consequences he may suffer.
 - 3. We may also consider the grief our sin causes others. A man may resist the urge to be unfaithful to his wife because he does not want to grieve her or his children.
 - 4. But do we ever consider the impact of OUR sins on God? How often do we stop and think about how our sins distress Him? How often do we resist at the moment of temptation because we do not want to grieve God (Genesis 39:9)? This is what Paul wants us to see in this passage. Our sin grieves the Holy Spirit – they distress our God.
- B. It is an aspect of sin's tragedy that we often fail to consider.
 - 1. Sometimes we see God as the grand cosmic cop, hiding behind a tree just waiting for us to mess up so He can pounce on us.
 - 2. Luke 15 paints a more accurate picture.
 - a. In verse 11, Jesus begins the story of a rebellious young man who leaves home, makes a mess of his life and then must humbly return.
 - b. But for a moment I want you to think about the father in this story. He is clearly grieved over his son's rebellion. When the son decides to return, this father is compassionate and eagerly receives him back (Luke 15:20-24).
 - c. The father in this story symbolizes God. He is distressed when we rebel and longs to see us come back to Him.
 - 3. Don't misunderstand; God is certainly angered by our acts of rebellion. In the Old Testament we frequently read of God's anger with Israel because they refused to obey Him (Numbers 32:13). But remember that through Hosea, God would compare His relationship with Israel to a husband who has an unfaithful wife (Hosea 1:2, 11:8). If you can imagine grief and anguish one experiences when their spouse cheats on them, then you can begin to understand what our sins do to God. We break His heart!
- C. But it's worse than this.
 - 1. We wound our God who has been so good to us.
 - 2. Paul has been reminding us of this throughout the early part of this epistle – how good God has been to us (Ephesians 2:1-8). Paul wants his audience to get this (Ephesians 3:14-19). When we really understand how much God loves us and all that He has done for us, and when we realize how much our sin grieves Him, this becomes a driving force that compels us to live a righteous life. Isaac Watts in his hymn, *When I Survey The Wondrous Cross*, closed with these words, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."
 - 3. It is a powerful incentive that motivates us to live a godly life. God has been good to me. I do not want to hurt Him any more!
 - 4. But as we continue through this verse we discover a second incentive. I should strive to live a godly life because...

WE HAVE BEEN SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

- A. This may be the most perplexing part of the verse for most people.
 - 1. Seals were commonly used in Bible times. They were carved from a piece of stone or metal and bear a name or image of some kind, whatever the owner would choose. These would be made into rings or necklaces so that the owner could carry it all the time. The seal would be pressed into soft wax and clay so that it would leave the owners unique mark.
 - 2. This served several important purposes. A king might want to seal or mark a letter with his special seal so that the recipients would know that it came from him (I Kings 21:8). Soft wax would be attached to the edge of a scroll and sealed to protect the document and prevent tampering (Revelation 6:1-2). Seals also served as marks of ownership, just as we might write our name on something.

- B. In this passage Paul says that we have been sealed.
 - 1. The idea is that we have been marked as God's possession; we are His people (II Timothy 2:19, I Peter 2:9).
 - a. It is a mark of authenticity. Many may claim to be God's children, but only those who are sealed by the Spirit are truly His.
 - b. It is a mark of ownership. We belong to God; we are His possession.
 - c. It is a mark of security. The sealing of God's people described in Revelation 7 reminded these suffering saints that God would watch over them during these dark hours.
 - 2. But how does the Holy Spirit seal God's people? This is accomplished through the message the Spirit revealed.
 - a. How is a person to know that he is counted among God's faithful? God did not say to look for a sign in the heavens or wait for a dream. He never tells us to wait for some impulse or feeling. In fact, there are people who are lost who feel like they are saved; and people who are saved who feel like they are lost.
 - b. There is only one way for a person to know he is counted among God's faithful. We must obey the plan revealed in this book. We have to walk in the path God has laid out for us in this book (I John 5:13).
 - c. There is no other way to know! Remember, it was the Holy Spirit who revealed this message. As we learn it and obey it, we are marked by the Spirit as God's true possession. There is a record made in the mind of God that we are His child.

- C. This reality carries some weighty implications. Let me mention two.
 - 1. First, there is this awesome blessing of being counted as God's own possession. I belong to Him. I wear His seal. He watches over me and protects me as His own.
 - 2. Second, this blessing comes with great responsibility.
 - a. Because I belong to Him, because I am His child, I ought to behave myself (II Timothy 2:19, I Peter 2:9, 11-12).
 - b. Whenever we took a school trip in high school, the teachers would always remind us that what we did not only reflected on ourselves, but on our families and the school. It was an incentive to behave.
 - c. We go out every day wearing the name of Christ and claiming to be part of His family. Consequently, what we do not only reflects on us, but on our family and our Lord. In light of all Christ has done for us, this should serve as a powerful incentive to behave ourselves and live godly lives. I don't want to hurt the cause...or my Lord.
 - 3. But there is still a third incentive we find in this passage.

THE DAY OF REDEMPTION IS COMING.

- A. One of the main reasons we misbehave is because we allow ourselves to live only in the present.
 - 1. As we choose our words and actions, we think only about today, this moment, what I want to do right now.
 - a. If lying to my parents will keep me out of trouble, that's what I will do.
 - b. If I feel like blowing up at a co-worker who bothered me, that's what I do.
 - c. If I feel like hanging on to a bitter grudge, that's what I do.
 - 2. The problem with living in the moment is this; no matter what advantage may come at that time, I still have to deal with the future and the consequences of my actions. It is foolish and short-sighted to live in the moment and not to ponder the long term implications of our behavior.

- B. As Paul concludes his thought in verse 30, he challenges us to look beyond the moment. In fact, he challenges us to look far beyond that moment, to ponder our ultimate future.
 - 1. This "day of redemption" refers to that last day, judgment day.
 - a. The Bible promises that Jesus is coming back (Acts 1:11).
 - b. When He returns, there will be a great judgment.
 - c. On that day, each of us will be called upon to give an account for the lives we have lived (II Corinthians 5:10).
 - d. What happens on that day will determine what happens to me forever. It will literally define our existence!
 - 2. When we get this idea set in our minds, it will dramatically change the way we behave (II Peter 3:10-12).

- C. This great day of redemption serves as a powerful incentive to live a godly life for two reasons.
 - 1. First, it prods me to live a godly life because I want to go heaven. This is my objective as a Christian. It's why I obeyed the gospel. It's why I try to do the right thing. It is what we prize more than anything. While there are benefits for us in this life, the primary benefit is that promise of being with God in heaven forever at the end of this life.
 - 2. But there is a second part to this that Paul does not specifically mention. I live a godly life because I do not want to go to hell. If we accept the idea of an eternal reward, we are logically required to accept the concept of eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46). The Bible warns that the wicked will suffer a terrible fate for all eternity when this life is over. I don't want that! So, as I make my choices every day, I begin with the end in mind. I make the choices that will put me on that path that leads to heaven.

CONCLUSION: WHICH PATH ARE YOU ON?