

Ephesians - Lesson 7
Ephesians 4:17-32; 5:1-2

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, without Your help our labor is useless, and without Your light our search is in vain. Invigorate our study of Your holy Word that, by due diligence and right discernment, we may establish ourselves and others in Your holy faith; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

Review of Ephesians 4:1-16

- Read Verses 1-16
- Verse 1
 - Discussed what it means to walk - you either walk with God or opposed to Him.
 - Manner worthy of your calling - God is the one who calls you to faith.
- Verse 4-6:
 - We see a Trinitarian pattern, a baptismal creed
 - Though this pattern is reversed from what we confess in our - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - in this order.
 - What we see here is exactly how the Christian is led to call God “Father”
 - The Holy Spirit leads the Christian to the Son and by the Son to the Father.
- Verses 8-10
 - We see the language of descending and ascending.
 - Refers to Christ state of humiliation and exultation
 - Humiliation - taking on the form of a servant
 - Exultation - Christ triumph over sin, death, and the devil, and His ascension to the right hand of the Father.
- Verse 11
 - As the one who has ascended He now fulfills His promise to shower heavenly gifts on His church through the Holy Spirit.
 - With the ascension, Christ gives the office of holy ministry to administer His gifts that deliver the forgiveness of sins.
- Verses 12-16
 - These ministers of Christ are to serve in Christlike meekness.
 - They serve for the sake of the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God - through the proclaiming the true Gospel

Chapter 4:17-32; 5:1-2

****READ VERSES 17-32****

Verses 17-19

- Paul begins with the rejection of idolatry and the sexual sins that accompanied it.
- He explains this in the harshest of terms.

- Verse 17
 - *Now this I say and testify in the Lord...*
 - The first words here draw a connection between the edifying gifts in the first part of chapter four and the Christian walk Paul explains in this section.
 - On account of what Christ has given the Ephesians, they have been changed and must not return to their old futile life, for to do this is destructive to one’s faith.

- The word to testify doesn't simply refer to what one believes to be true, but to what one has personally experienced - eye witnessed.
 - This is connected with Christ, as witness to him and to his resurrection.
 - *...to walk as the Gentiles do...*
 - Again as we have discussed “walking” refers to the entire life of faith, confession and obedience to God's word.
 - Paul's concern is not simply that the Ephesians would obey God's Law. Rather he warns them against falling back into their old ways.
 - Activities and patterns of life that would lead them away from faith in Christ and back into pagan beliefs.
 - Paul speaks of “the Gentiles” as a group separate from the Ephesians, who are one with Christ and no longer defined according to the flesh.
 - *...in the futility of their minds...*
 - The danger of backsliding is hinted at by the word futility.
 - It refers to empty, powerless
 - In the OT it's tied to the “vanity” used in Ecclesiastes and the 2nd Commandment's prohibition against taking the Lord's name “in vain, as a useless things.”
 - In the NT it refers to the practice of idolatry as “vain, worthless”.
 - The futility of their minds is the source of their evil behavior both in unbelief and sexual activities.
- Verses 18-19
 - Paul now goes into a detailed description of the Gentiles in their pagan walk:
 - *...darkened in the understanding...*
 - Not knowing the things of God
 - *...alienated from the life of God...*
 - This takes us back to chapter 2 which described the Ephesians' life before Christ
 - “Estranged, alienated”
 - “Separate from the benefits of citizenship in the people of Israel” (2:12)
 - *...hardness of heart...*
 - The hardened heart is unable to function properly as the Law's instrument to convict sin.
 - *...callous...*
 - dead flesh feels nothing
 - No “moral sensitivity” to restrain themselves from diving head first into depravity.
 - *...sensuality...*
 - Not a strong enough word.
 - In the Greek it conveys the sense of violating all bounds of what is socially acceptable.
 - Unbelieving Gentiles have given themselves permission to do whatever they want.
 - *...impurity/unclean...*
 - We see a feverish pursuit of what is unclean and unholy by the life of the pagan Gentile
 - This is in stark contrast to the Ephesians, who through baptism has been cleansed and made holy.
- Additional Thoughts on Verses 17-19
 - Scripture:

- In the OT prostitution, fornication, and related behavior are prohibited not primarily on moral grounds but rather because of their association with pagan sanctuaries and fertility rites.
- The Artemis temple of Ephesus and other shrines of Paul's time were famous because of the opportunities they offered to those who identified sex and religion.
- Ultimately, there is what can be considered a unholy marriage between idolatry and prostitution - that is a union with the deity.
- Today:
 - We see this massive sexual identity movement across our country and the world.
 - There is no separation between sexual preference and who one identifies as.
 - I can't help but think that the descriptions Paul lists in verse 18-19 would include a vast amount of people today.
 - We identify with the name that is placed on our baptism.
 - To engage in sexual activities outside of marriage is dangerous to one's faith.

Verse 20-24

- Paul moves to contrast between the Ephesians former pagan lives and their lives they have in Christ.
- Focus revolves around the understanding of the old man/new man.
- Verse 20
 - *But that is not the way you learned Christ...*
 - Learn indicates more than learning "about Christ," that is just mere information. Paul states "learn Christ" - Christ himself. The object of apostolic preaching and the object of faith.
- Verse 22-24
 - *...to put off your old self...put on the new self...*
 - This image of stripping and clothing is prevalent throughout scripture
 - In Genesis God clothes Adam and Eve with the skin of dead animals that was a consequence of their disobedience.
 - In Revelation saints are clothed in white robes. Washed with the blood of the lamb.
 - With Paul describing, putting off your old self, is a reference back to your baptism
 - Christians can be exhorted to put away the words of their former life because they have already put off the old man to whom the works belong.
 - Col. 3:8-10 - shows Christians can lay aside sinful works because they have already put off the old man and have already put on the new man.
 - Again, this is a distinctly baptismal as it connect with the image of putting to death, seen in Romans 6, or stripping off the old Adam before being clothed with Christ, Galatians 3:27.
 - *...former manner and is corrupted through deceitful desires...*
 - Former manner is tied to how the Ephesians walked prior to their baptism.
 - This is the old man (which this expression occurs twice more Rom 6:6, Col. 3:9).
 - being corrupted is a moral routineness that leads to eternal destruction.
 - It is an ongoing slide away from God
 - it has allusions to Eden where the serpent corrupted Even and thereby Adam.
 - *...likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*
 - Again, we see echoes of Eden with words like create, image of God

- Prior to the fall man was originally created in the image of God.
- Paul is able to proclaim that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away, new things have come (2. Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).
- Paul describes what this image looks like:
 - Righteousness (1st time used in Ephesians)
 - This is the saving judgment of God by which he declares the baptized to be not guilty of violating his justice on the basis of Christ substitutionary work.
 - Adam and Eve were endowed with righteousness. Christians through baptism are recreated with this status in Christ's righteousness.
 - Holiness:
 - Not to be understood here as the inner moral quality.
 - It is the gift of God that enables unclean and unholy people to be washed and sanctified, so they can stand in the presence of a holy God.
 - Baptism recreates paradise by restoring that relationship, granting the baptized the holy image of God that allows them to stand before him without being consumed.
- Thoughts:
 - What Paul says here about old man/new man is just wonderful.
 - Especially what he says about the image of God.
 - We see how the image of God should be defined: righteous and holiness.
 - This is on account of Christ's death.
 - Through baptism we begin to see how we were created in the image of god.
 - I like how the commentator phrased it "baptism recreates paradise by restoring that relationship between God and man.

Verses 4:25-5:2

- In 4:20-24 Paul has described the dramatic change that has come over the Ephesians through their Baptism into Christ, the work God brought by stripping of their old Adam and clothing them with the new Man.
- "Therefore" now draws out the implication of this change for how they walk. Put another way, this is the third use of the law.
- This section provides examples of the transformation with a pattern of prohibition, encouragement, and reason. See image:
- Prohibitions are behaviors or characteristics of the old Adam and Gentile.
- Encouragements are not. They can be considered Christlike qualities that are bestowed in Baptism and word for the upbuilding of the body of Christ.
- Reason roots the new action in God's work in Christ.

The next section (4:25–32) provides examples of the transformation with a triplet rhythm of prohibition, encouragement, and reason:

	Prohibition	Encouragement	Reason
4:25	having put off falsehood	Speak truth with one another	for we are members of one another
4:26–27	if you are angry, do not sin	do not let the sun go down on your anger	[or] you may give place to the devil
4:28	let the thief no longer steal	let him labor with his hands	so he might help anyone in need
4:29	let no harmful word proceed from your mouths	but speak what is good for edification	to give grace to those who hear
4:30	and do not grieve the Holy Spirit	—————	in whom you were sealed
4:31–32	let all bitterness, rage, etc., be taken away	and be good to one another, forgiving one another	God in Christ has forgiven you

- We see a series of references to the Decalogue:
 - 8th Commandment (v. 25, 29, 31)
 - 5th Commandment (v. 26-27)
 - 7th Commandment (v. 28)
 - 2nd Commandment (v. 29)
 - 1st Commandment (v. 30)

- Verse 30
 - ...*do not grieve the Holy Spirit...*
 - This phrase implies an action that denies or rejects the work of the Spirit.
 - The one whom you were sealed with for the day of redemption.
 - In this context “to cause grief” to the Spirit, doesn’t simply just mean to make sad:
 - It could be seen as something stronger such as offend or insult.
 - To act as if one is not baptized,
 - To return to the life that was lived prior to being sealed with the spirit is to insult the Holy Spirit.
 - OT example of this grieving the spirit is seen in Isaiah 63:10
 - *“But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.”*
 - We see that God grieved His Holy Spirit on account of Israel rebelling.
 - The Israelites, who redeemed by God, have turned away from their salvation.
 - I see a connection between the understanding of grieving the Holy Spirit and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit:
 - Matt. 12:31-32
 - Jesus laid charge against the Pharisees because they attributed Christ work to the devil. Thus rejecting the testimony of the Holy Spirit to Christ and denying his work.
 - Jesus calls this sin unforgivable.¹
 - Unforgivable because by rejecting the Spirit, you reject the means by which forgiveness comes.

Questions?

Thoughts/Questions

Any other items you would like to discuss?

Closing Prayers

O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have safely brought us to this day. Defend us in the same with Your mighty power, and grant that this day we fall into no sin neither run into any kind of danger, but that all our doings, being ordered by Your governance, may be righteous in Your sight; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

¹ Chemnitz nicely explains this “Not because such a person cannot repent, turn to the Spirit, and ask for forgiveness, but because it entails a rejection of the Holy Spirit Himself. A person who continues to reject the Spirit has no recourse to repentance and forgiveness because he rejects the means by which forgiveness comes - through the Holy Spirit.”