



**“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption,” Ephesians 4:30.**

### **Diligent Service: Social Life**

**Covenant:** We also engage . . . to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment, to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger.

**Aim:** To note that we are scripturally admonished to care about what others think of us.

**Text:** Ephesians 4:17-32

INTRODUCTION — “We also engage . . . to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment, to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger.” With such solemn words each Baptist has joined himself to the brethren in the church where he hold membership.

Whereas other portions of the Church Covenant have spoken of the member’s relationships in the church and in the home, this speaks of his relationships in social conduct. Such strong phrases as are used in the Covenant show the importance of Christian influence.

The influence of a Christian is compared by Jesus to the saltiness of salt, Matthew 5:13. Each is worthwhile only so long as his distinctive nature is retained. The Christian who has lost his influence for right is like salt that has lost its taste. Each believer should guard his influence. His church life, business life, home life and social life should each reflect the purity of his heart and the dedication of his life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one, not even the sinner, respects the Christian who lives a double life. The person who is pious at church and foul-mouthed at his work is a hypocrite and hinders the influence of the Gospel. The church member has a responsibility before God and a solemn pledge to his brethren to be an

example at all times. This lesson should be studied with an eye of examination turned inward.

## EXPOSITION

### I. WALKING CIRCUMSPECTLY IN THE WORLD, Ephesians 4:17-19.

One's "walk" has to do with his manner of life, his conduct and conversation. So the believer is obligated to "walk circumspectly" before the world. A "circumspect" walk is one that takes into consideration all the circumstances and consequences so that his life is prudent, discreet and cautious. This means the believer is to be thoughtful of his character and reputation at all times. Often great harm can be done in one thoughtless moment.

1. Believers should live purposeful lives, verse 17. Paul objects to any person's claiming allegiance to Christ while walking in the old unredeemed manner of life. Such a life is "vanity" — aimless, resultless, futile. Without Christ, life moves in areas devoid of real worth or reality. The believer is a "new creature" in Christ Jesus and should no longer live in the profitless ways, II Corinthians 5:17.

The Christian life has a purpose ordained of God. **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them,"** Ephesians 2:10. This redeems the life from worthlessness. **"He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again,"** II Corinthians 5:15. This gives such a holy purpose to living that each believer must make sure every day counts to the attainment of this worthy purpose.

2. Believers should live enlightened lives, verse 18. Those who have not trusted Jesus have blinded eyes to spiritual things. **"... the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,"** II Corinthians 4:4. So long as one lives without Christ, his mind remains blinded and perverted. But to blinded minds, Jesus comes as the Light of the world.

**"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,"** II Corinthians 4:6. **"The people which sat in darkness saw great light: and to them which sat in the region and**

**shadow of death light is sprang up,”** Matthew 4:16. **“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life,”** John 8:12. How, then, can any believer be content to walk in the ways of darkness once he has been enlightened in the Lord?

3. Believers should walk with spiritual purity, verse 19. While some unbelievers have sold themselves out to uncleanness believers stand in a bright contrast thereto. Sin leads a person downward and on to worse acts. The sinner can be so “past feeling” that he becomes calloused, apathetic, and sells himself into lasciviousness and wanton lawless insolence. He acknowledges no restraints and does whatever his caprice and wanton petulance may suggest.

Not so, the believer. His heart is made tender by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He is guided in the ways of righteousness and peace. In such conduct he exemplifies the spirit of the One who saved him.

In this manner does the believer “walk circumspectly in the world.” His life is marked with a divine purpose, a divine enlightenment, and a spiritual purity which evidences the divine presence. God is glorified in him as men see him and are pointed to the Father who is in heaven. This is the kind of life we covenanted to live when we joined a Baptist church.

## **II. BEING JUST IN OUR DEALINGS,** **Ephesians 4:20-24.**

1. The Lord Jesus becomes the believer’s example, verses 20-21. Faith brings a new union with the Lord. The knowledge of Jesus causes the “old man” of sinful living to be cut off. It is as an old, worn out and useless garment which is cast aside. The eternal spiritual realities in Christ Jesus make the “old man” no longer attractive. **“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin,”** Romans 6:6. So it can be said for the man who is in Christ Jesus, **“old things are passed away and all things are become new,”** II Corinthians 5:17.

This is no mere reformation, turning over a new leaf, but a new life which is based upon a new relationship with God. Such a new life is the circumspect walk subscribed to in the Church Covenant.

2. The old manner of life is given up, verse 22. Paul uses a verb tense which suggests the believer has “put off once for all” the old manner of life. Since it was “corrupt after deceitful lusts” it was not becoming of any man to wear it anyway. Having changed his life, the believer has no longer any

place for **“anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, lying,”** etc., Colossians 3:8-9. After all, these resemble Satan more than Christ and the conduct of the reprobate more than the redeemed. To be “just in our dealings,” all these things must be left off.

3. The new manner of life must be taken up, verses 23-24. The putting off of the “old man” is simultaneous with a putting on of the “new man.” This new man in Christ comes by the renewal of the mind, a grace accomplished by the Holy Spirit. In other words, this exchange is made in salvation in which one is resurrected to new life in Christ.

This new man in Christ is marked by the twin traits of righteousness and true holiness. The life in Christ is new in quality and is opposed to the old, worn out life of sin. It is a life “after God,” or “according to what God is in Himself.” It is a life in which the life of God lives in the believer, Galatians 2:20. This explains why the true believer in Jesus is marked by purity of life and affection.

He who lives such a life will act with benevolence and brotherly love in all dealings with men. He will be upright in conduct, honest in matters of trust, fair in business engagements, and otherwise “love his neighbor as himself.” This is what every believer should be.

### **III. BEING FAITHFUL IN OUR ENGAGEMENTS, Ephesians 4:25.**

Paul admonishes each believer, **“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another”** This admonition sets forth a two-fold obligation.

1. Put away lying and speak truth. Lying is a part of the old man and is to be put away when the old man is crucified. More is involved than just speaking untrue things. One may lie in attitude as well in words. Brethren in the church are to faithfully perform all their agreements and obligations. To do otherwise is to belie the testimony of their experience of new life through Jesus Christ.

2. Remember your responsibility to your brethren. **“We are members one of another,”** Paul wrote, **“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another,”** Romans 12:4-5. Ephesians 4:16 has been paraphrased in these words: “Under His direction the whole body is fitted together perfectly, and each part in its own special way helps the other parts, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”

The “body” to which reference is being made is the body of Christian brethren who compose a local church congregation. Each is to help the other. When a brother considers the reflection unworthy conduct brings upon all the church, he will refrain from it. Fulfilling every obligation attendant upon his profession as a Christian, the believer must be “faithful in his engagements.”

#### **IV. BEING EXEMPLARY IN OUR DEPORTMENT, Ephesians 4:26-28.**

In principle the Christian put off the old man and put on the new in conversion. But what is true in principle must become real in practice. The new nature received in conversion must be cultivated while the old nature must be subdued.

1. Keep a firm control on self, verse 26. There is a place for anger in the Christian life provided it is a “righteous” indignation. Two limitations are set on anger, however. First, it must not be left free to be selfish, unguarded and uncontrolled. That is sin. Second, it must not be cherished up: **“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”** It is possible to be angry without sinning. It must be controlled, limited in duration, and not permitted to take root within the heart. If anger is permitted to run to the sinful limits, it becomes the first step to murder. If a Christian would be “exemplary in deportment” he must control his anger.

2. Never permit Satan to get the upper hand, verse 27. Far too often the anger of man gives Satan an opportunity for action and evil results. Those who nurse their anger may not realize it, but they are giving Satan an excellent opportunity to exploit their indignation to his own ends. But he must not be given the slightest bit of room to operate in the believer's life. A good rule is to settle any unpleasantness of the day or be reconciled to any anger aroused during the day before one goes to bed at night. Otherwise communion with God will be seriously handicapped.

Paul's expression, **“Be angry, and sin not”** is a quotation from the Septuagint (Greek) version of Psalm 4:4. The rest of that verse states, **“commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.”** Keeping the forgiving spirit, being always ready to be reconciled concerning any offence, the believer will live an honorable life before men and be able to commune with God in the quietness of the night.

3. Get profit by honest means only, verse 28. The man who would live “circumspectly in the world, be just: in his dealings, faithful in his engagements, and exemplary in his deportment,” must be honest. Deceit or

unjust gain in any form is forbidden. It is no excuse for the Christian to say that “everybody does it”; everybody may indeed do it, but Christians have a higher standard to maintain than the level of society.

Theft is an evidence of selfishness. Therefore, Paul urges that instead of stealing the believer should make enough to give some help to others who are in need. Honest labour makes stealing no longer necessary. If a Christian brother would be an example in his deportment, he must learn the grace of honest toil. After all, this is the way the Bible said man must make his living, Genesis 3:19.

## **V. AVOIDING TATTLING. BACKBITING AND EXCESSIVE ANGER, Ephesians 4:29-32.**

1. Watch your speech, verse 29. How it sounds like Paul to write, **“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”** Foul language had probably been the habit of some of the converts before they became Christians; but such language is most unbecoming one who names the name of Christ. It must be renounced. Swearing, foul-mouthed talk, or worthless speech degrades a man before his companions. In Colossians 4:6 Paul says a man's speech must be “seasoned with salt” unless it become insipid, or even worse.

It is not enough that one not be filthy-mouthed, however. Just as the command to steal no more was accompanied by a command to work diligently, so the prohibition of harmful talk is accompanied by the encouragement of helpful talk. Gracious words will -build up believers. Each contact with a fellow believer should bring spiritual benefit if that conversation is proper. Blessed is that man who can so control his tongue that he speaks only that which blesses, strengthens, and builds up.

2. Seek to please God, verse 30. There are five classes of sins mentioned in verses 25-32. They belong to the old man. They are lying, sinful anger, stealing, improper language and resentment. These sins are contrary to the indwelling Spirit and grieve Him deeply. This is why some believers are miserable and have lost their joy, peace, and blessedness in the Lord. To grieve one's brother and cause him to stumble is an offense against the Christian fellowship, Romans 14:15, 21. How much greater sin it must be to grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

All passions, practices, and exercises which are contrary to the Holy Spirit of God are to be laid aside. The believer must walk in fellowship with

Him who is his teacher, guide, companion, intercessor, sanctifier and seal unto redemption. No life can be pleasing to God when it is grieving to the Spirit. So much is involved in Christian conduct. The Baptist church member has a solemn obligation upon him in the Covenant.

3. Watch out for resentment, verse 31. Lest the Spirit be grieved, put away everything which menaces unity of heart and purpose among believers. The list of sins in verse 31 all have to do with a bad temper. “Bitterness” is a sour, resentful spirit. “Wrath” is a sudden outburst of passion. “Anger” is a settled, smoldering feeling of resentment, breaking out occasionally in “clamour” and “evil speaking.” “Malice” is a vicious disposition, the deep unkindness of the self-centered, Christless heart. None of these should have a place in the believer’s heart.

Such a list of vices are not infrequent in the New Testament. They are ugly and unpleasant to read. However, they throw into clearer relief the corresponding graces recommended. Against such a background, mutual kindness, compassion, and a readiness to forgive stand out boldly. As the former passions characterize Satan these latter characterize Christ. If the believer would claim relationship with Christ, let him act in the spirit of Christ.

4. Be controlled by loving-kindness, verse 32. With the ejection of the vices listed above, there arises a vacuum in the heart. This must be filled with the fine virtues now recommended: kindness, tenderheartedness, forgiveness, and love.

“Kind” means to be useful or helpful. “Tenderhearted” means to have compassionate feelings toward the weakness and misery of others. “Forgiving” means to pardon in grace. Since these are the qualities which belong to God, they are especially appropriate for believers. If anyone thinks the demands here made are too great, let him remember the example set by the Lord Jesus. The indwelling Spirit of God will make it possible for believers to forgive others just as God forgave them for Christ's sake.

Those who live anew in Christ, who are motivated by the Holy Spirit, will find a delightful challenge in the Covenant demands “to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment, to avoid all tattling, back-biting, and excessive anger.” This is being a mature Christian!

**CONCLUSION** — The believer must live as a new creation in Christ Jesus. To profess salvation and walk in old habits of sin will reproach the Lord and His church. Let the believer consider himself dead to sin but alive to God through Jesus Christ. Let him never yield the members of his body to sin, but rather yield himself to God to work righteousness. Read Romans 6

in this context.

The end of this type of life will be fulfillment to all church obligations and obedience to the will of God. It will manifest the Spirit of God in all dealings, including the business life which will be studied next week. **“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life,”** Romans 6:22.

## QUESTIONS

1. What portion of the Church Covenant is considered today?
2. What is the “old man” and the “new man”?
3. What does it mean to “walk circumspectly”?
4. What is God's purpose in the believer?
5. Why is truthfulness important to Christians?
6. How can you control anger?
7. Why is the speech to be guarded?
8. What sins are condemned in today's lesson?
9. What graces are recommended?