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

Diligent Service: Social Life

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

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, back-biting, and excessive anger.

Text: Ephesians 4: 17-32.

INTRODUCTION—It makes an important difference what others think about you. The influence of the Christian is a most precious possession. It must be defended and kept pure and strong. It can be used to the glory of God. There can be no substitutes for a circumspect walk, just dealings, faithful performance of obligations, exemplary lives, control of the tongue, and control of the temper. These are the very virtues which we pledged ourselves to demonstrate as members of a Baptist church.

The influence of a Christian is compared to the saltiness of salt, Matthew 5:13. One is worthwhile only so long as his distinctive nature is retained. The Christian without the proper influence is like salt which has lost its savour. He is good for nothing in the Kingdom of God. How zealously should the believer guard his influence. His church life, business life, home life, and social life should all reflect his purity of heart and dedication to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Christian's social life which is the subject of study today.

EXPOSITION

I. The Old Life, 4:17-19.

1. The old life was a life of vanity, verse 17. Paul raises objection to claiming allegiance to Christ while walking in the old manner of life. The reason is that the former conduct was marked by “vanity” (aimless, resultless, futile). There was a lack of attainment of anything really worthy. This expression is elsewhere used to refer to the heathen world in general. Without Christ, life moves within the limits of intellectual and moral resultlessness, given over to things devoid of worth or reality. Surely the man who is a “new creature” (II Corinthians 5:17) cannot live in this old way. *“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. The Christian life has a purpose—God has 'ordained that believers should produce a life of good works, Ephesians 2:10. This redeems the life from worthlessness.

2. The old life was directed by a darkened mind, verse 18a. The Scriptures describe the unredeemed as having been blinded in time past and the condition still continuing. This reminds that *“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 he will live with his mind (understanding, feeling, desires) perverted. The unsaved man is no safe guide concerning religion as he is personally blind to the truth, I John 2:8-11. To blinded minds Jesus comes as a Light to the world!

3. The old life was alienated from God, verse 18b. Paul seems to see man as sharing the Life of God before the Fall in Eden. Spiritual contact with God brings the “life of God” into the soul of man. The Christian believer has found “this life is in His Son,” I John 5:11. True life is to know by experience the true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, John 17:3. To refuse Jesus Christ as Saviour is to shut one's self from intimate fellowship with God. Thus “ignorance” of God is seated in the impenitent and unredeemed nature of the unbeliever's heart. Sin always cuts one off from God. However, to have never repented of sins, to have no hope in the Saviour whom God provided, is to be so completely alienated from God that there is no hope left. Deliverance can be brought only by the resurrection power of Jesus, Ephesians 2:14. The old life was a life of spiritual uncleanness, verse 19. Sin is especially tragic in that it continually debases the finer nature of the one who persists in it. The sinner comes to be “past feeling” (calloused, apathetic, insensible to pain). Moral insensibility causes one to sell himself to wanton lawless insolence (lasciviousness). This person is one who acknowledges no restraints, but does whatsoever his caprice and

wanton petulance may suggest. The ultimate result is that sinner greedily engages in every type of uncleanness. Thus does sin debase man!

II. The New Life, 4:20-32.

1. It is life in a new way, verses 20-23. Those who are redeemed are expected to live new and different lives from that described above. They have not so learned to know and serve the Lord Jesus. Faith brought a new union with Christ. The unsaved person is dominated by the influences of sin. Thus the “old man” (the man unsaved and controlled by sin) is put off as an old, worn out, and useless garment. He is put off because the sinner learned the eternal and spiritual reality which is in Christ Jesus. This new life comes by being “born again,” John 3:5-7. The man who is thus “in Christ” is a new creature. For him old things are passed away and all things are become new, II Corinthians 5:17. Thus it can be said 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. This is a new life because it is based upon a new relationship with God. This new life is the circumspect walk promised in the church covenant.

2. It is a life of righteousness and holiness, verse 24. The putting off of the “old man” is simultaneous with a putting on of the “new man.” This new man in Christ is marked by the twin traits of righteousness and true holiness. The new life is new in quality (as opposed to the old, worn out life of sin). It is a life “after God,” or, “according to what God is in Himself.” (That is, it is a life created after the pattern of what God is.) This explains why the person who trusts in Christ is marked by purity of life and affection. A life of righteousness and holiness produces the people who are “exemplary in deportment,” as defined in the Covenant. One need not fear to follow the example of the “new man” described here.

3. It is a life of truthful dealings, verse 25. Paul admonishes the Ephesian believers to “put away once for all lying” and to deal truthfully with one another. Since lying is a part of the old man, when he is put off, so will his habits be also. Since each believer is vitally related to every other believer, their relations should be based on pure honesty. Baptists covenant to be “faithful in our engagements.” This means words, deeds, and all other relationships are to be based on honesty. One may lie by attitude as well as by 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.

4. It is a life of self-control, verses 26-27, 31. Those passions which are

expressed by irritation, exasperation, and embitterment are to have no place in the Christian's life. Far too often the anger of man gives Satan an opportunity for action and evil results. Anger may be sin when it is selfish and over-indulged. Paul warns against the sin of unrighteous anger. The Baptist church Covenant agrees that those subscribing to it will “avoid excessive anger.” Such is unbecoming any man, especially a child of God. The excesses of anger may be controlled if anger is not permitted to endure. Thus the admonition, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” When anger is treasured in the heart it becomes as a cankerous influence which blights the life. In most occasions, *“the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,”* James 1:20.

5. It is a life of honest labour, verse 28. The Baptist member has agreed to be “just in our dealings.” This portion of the Covenant forbids deceit and unjust gain in any form. It is surprising that Christians would have a problem here. However, even those who would not stoop to lower forms of stealing may be tempted to steal through improper business transactions. Paul suggests the converse for stealing—that which would make it no longer necessary—is honest labour. The Bible approves the idea of man working and making his living by the sweat of his face, Genesis 3:19. There is no dishonor to work, not even the most menial tasks. There is a greater dishonor to the person who refuses to work and seeks to live by deceit. The Baptist must be sure he renders proper service for the amount he is paid.

6. It is a life of edifying speech, verse 29. The words which may be designated “corrupt” (rotten, worn out, unfit for use, worthless, bad) have no business being used by believers. Speech is too precious a gift and too powerful an instrument to be used in such a base way. On the contrary, gracious words which will build up the hearer are to be uttered. Believers should receive spiritual benefit from every contact with fellow believers! The church Covenant urges the members of the church to “avoid all tattling, back-biting.” This type of speech profits nothing. It is that vain speech which God will condemn in judgment, Matthew 12:36. Paul's admonition concerning relationships in the church will apply in the area of speech: *“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another,”* Romans 14:19. How blessed is the man who can so control his tongue that he speaks only that which blesses, strengthens, and builds up!

7. It is a life of obedience to the Holy Spirit, verse 30. The utterance of evil or worthless words is repugnant to the holiness of the Spirit, and is to be refrained from because it grieves Him! All passions, practices, and exercises which are contrary to the Spirit are to be laid aside. He is the Spirit of God

and the people of God must walk in full obedience to Him. He is our Teacher, Guide, Companion, Intercessor, Sanctifier, and our Seal unto redemption. Surely none can grieve Him without serious sin! It is He who has sealed the believers unto the day of redemption, having wrought salvation in response to faith. Now He rejoices in the believer's obedience and grieves in his disobedience. (Again, this demonstrates the personality of the Holy Spirit as feeling is ascribed to Him.) No life can be pleasing to God when it is grieving to the Spirit. All the deeds of personal righteousness mentioned above (and set out in the Church Covenant) are approved and inspired by the Spirit. To ignore them is to grieve Him. What an obligation is upon the member of a Baptist church!

8. It is a life of loving-kindness, verse 32. When the mental attitude of harshness, passion, and injurious speech is put away, the believer finds it possible to obey the injunction of this verse. A life of loving-kindness will be marked by tenderheartedness, forgiveness, and other Christian graces. Tenderheartedness is compassion on the unworthy. Forgiveness, as used here, means to forgive in the sense of treating the offending party graciously. If anyone thinks this is asking too much, let him remember this type of life follows the example and is directed to the honour of Christ. Believers should find it possible to forgive through Christ just as God forgave them through Him. Those who are truly motivated by this spirit will find a delight in the 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 take care to live as a new man in Christ. To profess faith in Christ and walk in old habits and sins will surely bring a reproach to 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. 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 Sunday. Paul sets out the blessed consequence of justification in these words: "*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. Read the portion of the Church Covenant studied today.
2. Explain Matthew 5:13.

3. What is the difference between the “old man” and the “new man”?
4. Describe the condition of the “old man.”
5. Explain II Corinthians 5:17.
6. Discuss the place of truth in Christian's speech and conduct.