



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

Deportment

Lesson Aim: to note that we are scripturally admonished to maintain Christian behavior at all times.

L453. Date: May 1976. **Text:** Ephesians 4:17-32.

Topic: Church Covenant; Conduct: Of Believers.

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

Christian deportment is another phase of the solemn commitment which a believer makes when he identifies himself with a Baptist church. “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.” That is the kind of relationship each Baptist church member should have with all other people — in the membership or outside of it.

Jesus spoke of the influence of the Christian as “salt,” Matthew 5:13. Salt is good and useful. Salt which has lost its savour (its saltiness) is not good. Why? Saltiness is the distinctive nature of salt. Jesus said Christians are like that. Influence for holiness is the distinctive nature of Christians. Both salt and Christians are worthwhile only as long as their natures are retained. A Christian who has lost his influence for right is like salt which has lost its taste. Each Christian should guard zealously his influence that he might be the Lord's “salt of the earth.”

No one, whether sinner or saint, respects the person who lives a double life. A person who is pious at church and vulgar at work is a hypocrite and a hindrance to the outreach of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each church member

has a solemn obligation before God, as well as a solemn pledge to his brethren in the church, to be an example at all times. That is why today's lesson aims "to admonish the church member to maintain Christian behavior at all times."

I. CIRCUMSPECT WALK (Ephesians 4:17-19).

One's "walk" refers to his manner of life — his conduct and conversation. A "circumspect" walk refers to a life which is prudent, discreet and cautious. It means the believer is thoughtful of his conduct at all times that it may reflect Christian character and carry an influence for righteousness. "Your actions speak so loud I cannot hear a word you say" is an old adage. It means people look at what one does more than they listen to what he says. It is proper, therefore, that the Baptist church covenant should express the Christian obligation to have a "circumspect walk."

A. Live life with a purpose (verse 17). The Christian life is filled with a divine purpose. **"... 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. That is why the Bible teaches that the believer should walk in a new manner of life. The life without Christ is "vanity" — empty, fruitless, futile. Without Christ, life moves in areas devoid of real spiritual content and value.

The Christian has a holy purpose in living. He also has a solemn obligation to behave according to the purpose of God. The Bible says of Jesus, **"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. Live your life, therefore, to the glory of God through His church. That is His purpose in you.

B. Live life with spiritual enlightenment (verse 18). Consider the solemn, but beautiful, truth expressed in these verses of Scripture. **"... 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. That is the solemn part of the message. Here is the beautiful part: **"The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up,"** Matthew 4:16. **"... 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. That is God's

word to you!

How can any believer, enlightened by the Light of the World (Jesus), continue to walk in the darkness of the unregenerate? He must not! May he live in the light of the Lord.

C. Live life in spiritual purity (verse 19). It is the privilege of each believer to “walk circumspectly in the world.” Others may run to the excess of sinful lusts; he cannot. Others may live in uncleanness; he cannot. Others may have habits which the world approves; he cannot. Others may live without restraints; he cannot. Why? He is not his own; he is bought with a price. He is obligated to glorify God in both his body and in his spirit, for both belong to God (I Corinthians 6:19, 20).

Thank God for Christians who “walk circumspectly in the world.” They live lives marked by a divine purpose, a divine enlightenment, and a spiritual purity. That kind of believer glorifies God and calls sinners to Christ.

II. JUST DEALINGS (Ephesians 4:20-24)

All relations with people should be characterized by honesty and integrity, if the Christian truly serves Christ. That is what is demanded in the commitment to be “just in our dealings.”

A. Follow the example of Jesus (verses 20, 21). Paul said, “. . . The truth is in Jesus.” The believer has “learned” that truth since he is “in Christ” by faith. Union with the living Lord causes the “old man” of sinful living to be put off once and for all. As an old, worn out, and useless garment is cast away, so the qualities of the unregenerate life are left behind. **“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. The person who trusts Jesus as personal Saviour becomes a new creation. For him, old things pass away and all things become new (II Corinthians 5:17). The life of Christ in him causes him to live in relation to God and men as Jesus lived.

B. Give up the old manner of life (verse 22). Once for all the believer should surrender the right to live as flesh nature dictates. A life “corrupt with deceitful lusts” is not worthy of one who belongs to Jesus. Such sins as “anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, lying” have no place in the Christian experience (Colossians 3:8, 9). Those resemble Satan more than they are like Christ. If you would be “just in your dealings,” those things must be forsaken. Have the grace to stop just here; get on your knees before God, and examine your life. Have you surrendered the “old man” in exchange for the “new man” in Christ?

C. Take up the new manner of life (verses 23, 24). In exact proportion as the “old man” is put away, the “new man” is put on. The “new man” is the divine nature (placed in the Christian at conversion) expressing itself in attitude, word, and deed.

The new man in Christ is marked by the twin graces of righteousness and holiness. That shows that the believer is living a life “after God,” according to what God is in Himself. It is simply the life of Jesus Christ lived in the believer (Galatians 2:20). That is why it is a life marked by purity of attitude and action.

He who lives such a new life in Christ will act with benevolent spirit and brotherly love in all his dealings with others. He will be upright in conduct, honest in matters of trust, and fair in business engagements. He will love his neighbor as himself. That is what Jesus Christ would have every believer to be.

III. FAITHFUL TO DUTY (Ephesians 4:25)

Each believer is admonished to put away (strip off) all that is false, speak only truth to his fellow man, because believers are united to one another in Christ like parts of a body are joined. That produces a two-fold obligation.

A. Deal honestly with one another. **“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour . . .”** Lying is a part of the old man. It is to be put away when the old man is crucified. Why would a Christian wish to deal untruthfully with another person since Jesus is “the truth”?

The requirement for honesty involves more than refraining from telling untrue things. One may lie in attitude as well as in words. The call is for faithfulness in all agreements and obligations that the world may know the difference which God makes in one who becomes a Christian.

B. Remember your responsibility to your brethren. **“ . . . We are members one of another.”** God repeatedly stated that believers are joined one to another as one body in Christ. Each is a member of every other. **“ . . . 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 every one members one of another,”** Romans 12:4, 5. Ephesians 4:16 has been paraphrased: “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.” You are members of “one body” in your church congregation. Be faithful in fulfilling your

duty in that body.

IV. EXEMPLARY DEPORTMENT (Ephesians 4:26-28)

Principle must be translated into practice for the Christian life to be lived in truth. The Christian put off the old man and put on the new man when he was saved. That is positional truth. The new nature must be cultivated and the old nature must be subdued, if one lives like a Christian before the world. That is experiential.

Three practical suggestions will help translate principle into practice.

A. Keep a firm control on self (verse 26). There is no place for fleshly aroused anger in the Christian. God sets two controls over human anger. (1) It should be guarded and controlled lest it become selfish emotion. (2) It ought not to be carried over from one day to the next; the sun should not go down upon his anger. Anger ought to be controlled, limited in its duration, and never permitted to take root in the heart. The Christian who would be “exemplary in his deportment” must control his temper.

B. Never permit Satan to get the upper hand (verse 27). To “give place” to the devil means to give him a foothold, to give him a base of operation. Those who nurse their anger may not realize it, but they are giving Satan an excellent opportunity to exploit their indignation to his ends. It is a good rule for one to settle any unpleasantness of the day, or to be reconciled to any person angered during the day, before retiring at night.

The expression, “Be angry, and sin not” is a quotation from the Septuagint (Greek) version of Psalm 4:4. The rest of the verse is, “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” Before you go to sleep, review the day, settle all accounts with God, and be at peace. You can begin the next day with a clean slate and represent Christ.

C. Seek honest profit only (verse 28). God condemns deceit or unjust gain in any form. To say that everybody else does it is no excuse for the Christian. He is not called to live as everyone else; he is called to live as a “new man” in Christ. His standard is higher than that of the rest of society.

V. WHOLESOME ATTITUDES (Ephesians 4:29-32)

A. Watch your speech (verse 29). Break the old habits of swearing or using vulgar and degrading speech. As a Christian, your speech is to be “seasoned with salt” lest it become insipid or worse (Colossians 4:6). Harmful talk is to be replaced by helpful talk. Make your conversation that which will encourage and build up people. Let each person be stronger after

he has talked with you. Know the blessing of speaking only that which strengthens and builds up. That will be the speech of the true Christian.

B. Seek to please God (verse 30). All passions, practices, and patterns which are contrary to the Holy Spirit should be once for all forsaken. Sins like lying, anger, stealing, improper language, and resentment are to be left behind. The Christian who persists in any of them will grieve the Holy Spirit and lose his joy, peace, and blessedness in Christ. No life is pleasing to God, nor edifying to men, when it is grieving the Holy Spirit.

C. Watch out for resentment (verse 31). The list of sins mentioned 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 hostility, occasionally breaking out in clamor and evil speech. Substitute for them the graces of mutual kindness, compassion, and a readiness to forgive. Let your attitude reflect the spirit of Christ, not the spirit of Satan.

D. Be controlled by loving-kindness (verse 32). What a lovely list of graces: kindness, tenderheartedness, forgiveness, and love. Those are qualities which belong to God in perfection and are to be reflected in the children of God. The indwelling Spirit of God makes it possible.

The believer should live as a new creation in Christ Jesus. The old habits of sin will bring reproach to the lovely name of Jesus and reflect on the integrity of his church. He is dead to sin and alive to righteousness in Jesus Christ. He should never yield his bodily members to sin. He is to yield himself to God as His instrument that he may work righteousness to the glory of God. He ought to live according to the description in Romans 6.

There is one sure way by which the believer can live up to his commitments in the church covenant. He can live in the spirit of Romans 6:11, 22: “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord . . . But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

Questions

1. How is today's study related to Matthew 5:13?
2. What is a “circumspect walk”?
3. How does Ephesians 2:10 relate to Christian conduct?
4. How can you keep your life pure?

5. How can you put off the “old man” and put on the “new man”?
6. How can Galatians 2:20 be practical in your life?
7. How does Romans 12:4, 5 relate to you and your church?
8. How can you control your temper?
9. How can you keep Satan out of your life?
10. How can you apply the lesson to your life?