

From Grief to Glory

Ephesians 4:30-32

Today we finish Ch4—Paul has covered a lot of ground!

- We spent several weeks studying the UNITY we experience in God's Kingdom Family.
- We spent several weeks examining what our new life looks like as God's Kingdom Kids
- Today Paul summarizes all of this and exhorts us to yield to the Spirit of God.

Ephesians 4:30-32

And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

****PRAYER****

- General George Gordon Meade brought such a grief upon Abraham Lincoln in July of 1863.
- on July 1-3, 1863 outside Gettysburg, PA, General Meade led the Union Army in a decisive victory over General Robert E. Lee's Confederate army of the South.
- In defeat, General Lee retreated south but could not cross back over the swollen Potomac river.
- General Lee and the ENTIRE SOUTHERN ARMY camped near Williamsport Maryland for 9 days before crossing back into Virginia on July 13-14th.
- Picture that—a defeated army pressed against a flooded river just sitting there for 9 days and General Meade's Union Army does not attack!
- As you can imagine Lincoln was DEEPLY grieved that Meade allowed this to happen rather than finishing the Rebel Army and ending the war.
- In their grief some people turn to alcohol, others might punch a wall...Lincoln wrote a letter to the general—a letter that he never sent.
- In this letter, Lincoln expresses his frustration, his anger, and his grieved heart over Meade's decision to NOT pursue the defeated southern army and finish the war in the days following Gettysburg:

You fought and beat the enemy at Gettysburg; and, of course, to say the least, his loss was as great as yours-- He retreated; and you did not pressingly pursue him; but a flood in the river detained him, till, by slow degrees, you were again upon him. You had at least twenty thousand veteran troops directly with you, and as many more raw ones within supporting distance, all in addition to those who fought with you at Gettysburg; while it was not possible that he had received a single recruit; and yet you stood and let the flood run down, bridges be built, and the enemy move away at his leisure, without attacking him...

"Again, my dear general, I do not believe you appreciate the magnitude of the misfortune involved in Lee's escape. He was within your easy grasp, and to have closed upon him would, in connection with our other late successes, have ended the war. As it is, the war will be prolonged indefinitely."

Lincoln grieves over the fact that a victorious, well-supplied, well-supported General, in an excellent position for victory, **does not act according to his identity, his position or his standing:**

- He did not ACT as if he was victorious
- He did not ACT as if he were well-supplied
- He did not ACT as if he was well-supported by the President
- He did not ACT as if he was in an excellent position

This failure to act—to FUNCTION in his identity and position—prolonged the death and misery for the Civil War for another 2 years...

I think President Lincoln experienced a grief similar to the sort of grief that Paul is warning us about causing the Holy Spirit.

- Our pushing against the Spirit and not walking in our identity in Jesus, grieves the Spirit.
- When we reject God's love and efforts to redeem His image in us, we cause God sorrow.

Ephesians 4:30

And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

Paul reminds us that the Spirit is an incredible gift of God—it is a gift of GOD HIMSELF!

- The Spirit is God's presence that benefits the Christian in many ways.

In John 16 Jesus lays out a clear theology of the Holy Spirit for us to examine:

John 16:7-11 (NASB)

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

The Holy Spirit is the guide, the motivation, and the power behind our new life in Jesus.

- AND He leads us in our new life together as God's Kingdom Family.

The Holy Spirit works in 5 ways to lead us in our new Identity in Jesus:

1. The Spirit convicts us of our rebellion to God and of our need for salvation.

- He fuels our response to the Gospel—The Spirit Motivates us to respond to the love and grace of God and receive His gift of love in Jesus.

John 16:8 (NASB)

And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment

2. The Spirit convinces us to consider Jesus

- After showing us our hopelessness he shows us HOPE by showing us Jesus!
 - He makes an appeal to our hearts
 - The Spirit helps us KNOW what is right and KNOW what is of God...
 - This is the conviction of the Spirit.

3. The Spirit also Seals our identity by sealing us in God's Kingdom family.

- He powerfully SEALS us in the promises of God—into the family of God.
- He is God's pledge to us assuring us of our standing with God (God's possession).

Ephesians 1:13b-14 (NASB)

[...] you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory

- The Spirit is God's PLEDGE to us—His unfailing presence!
- The Spirit assures us that we are God's!

4. The Spirit communicates to us and shows us the will of God.

John 16:13-14 (NLT) When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. 14 He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me.

- He leads us into what is true and reveals what is NOT true.
- He knows God's plans and leads us in them (the future).
- He shows us Jesus in all things.

5. The Spirit empowers us to walk in the promises of God.

The Spirit is God's agent of:

- Gospel change in us—He empowers our new identity as God's own Kingdom Kids.
- Gospel Unity—The Spirit empowers Kingdom Family Unity

Today Paul exhorts us to not grieve God by rejecting this INCREDIBLE gift of Himself to us.

- He has been leading us to exchange the OLD self for our NEW self in Jesus.
- We have spent several weeks examining some of these NEW tendencies, NEW desires and NEW behaviors that we now have in Jesus...

...And he is reminding us that these things happen by the POWER and PRESENCE and WORK of God's Holy Spirit.

- And that we grieve—bring sorrow to the Spirit when we neglect or refuse this supernatural power, presence and work of grace in our life.

God is working something supernatural in you—something so amazing that you could never pull it off on your own.

- **Let God lead you and change you!**
- **Don't grieve God by resisting the good work that He is working in you!"**

Paul then SHOWS US what it looks like to allow the Holy Spirit to work this new identity in us.

- There are things we GET RID OF and there are things that we need to BE:

Ephesians 4:31-32

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

- Paul lists a string of things that we are to "get rid of": rage, anger, harsh words and slander...
- And he then exhorts us to BE: kind, tenderhearted & forgiving.

These last few weeks we have examined this behavioral change that Paul is talking about, and we have seen that it is IMPOSSIBLE for us to do this alone.

- We are NOT able to be good on our own.
- We need God to make us good.

THIS is the gospel—this is what Jesus does to us and for us and in us—He makes us GOOD!

This is why the work of the Holy Spirit is so significant for us—He leads us TO Jesus.

- He leads us OUT of our old identity and INTO our new identity in Jesus.
- He SHOWS us Jesus—reminding us of who HE is and who WE are in Him.

Jesus makes BAD people GOOD—He CHANGES us.

Once we are first *made good* by Jesus, we are THEN able to *do good* from our new, good heart.

- Jesus makes us good—Our good behavior does not make us good—or even better... Jesus gives us NEW LIFE—

Look at how John describes this NEW LIFE we have in Jesus:

1 John 1:5-6 (NLT) This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. 6 So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth.

John sharpens the pencil that Paul has been using to illustrate this NEW LIFE in Jesus.

- **He says that God is light and so if we are in darkness then we are OBVIOUSLY not of God.**
- He says we are LYING if we claim to be in the light but are living in the dark.
 - It is a very rational argument—you are either IN or OUT.
 - And John uses “spiritual light” as the determining factor.

This is like General Meade—the victorious General of Gettysburg resting in safety as a tired man rather than pursuing his role as General of an army at war.

- Resting when he should be using his position as General to form an offensive against the enemy.
- Resting while his 30,000 man army sits—far from their homes and families—waiting for an order...
- Resting while incredible resources—cannon, horses, ammunition, etc...sat waiting for an order...

This is the proposal the Apostle John is challenging each of us to consider—are you a child of God?

- Are you living in the light?

He says that some may CLAIM to live in the light, but they are deceiving themselves if they’re still living in darkness.

That’s a heavy truth John puts out for us to consider, but its not meant to condemn/shame us.

- John is trying to ENCOURAGE US—Just as the Apostle Paul has been encouraging us!
- Paul would say, TAKE OFF the dark old life and PUT ON the new life in the light!

That is really what is at the heart of today’s passage:

Paul’s exhortation is not just a list of things we need to do, it reveals HOW these change occur:

- **This CHANGED LIFE happens from the inside out:**

Ephesians 4:31-32

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Paul says that this NEW IDENTITY starts deep within our heart: bitterness...

Bitterness is not a behavior, bitterness is a posture of the heart toward others.

- Bitterness (aka resentment) sets in when anger is given a place in our heart.
- Bitterness and resentment poisons a person’s heart...

“Harboring resentment is like taking poison and hoping the other person dies.”—Augustine

- The self-inflicted poison of bitterness and resentment affects our ability to regulate our anger.

Paul explains the outward effect—the EXPLOSIVE behavior that a bitter heart produces:

Ephesians 4:31 —Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.

A heart of bitterness fosters an attitude of RAGE rather than RIGHTEOUSNESS (righteous anger).

- Rage prevents us from being able to take offense and disappointment captive.
- Rage releases our offense and disappointment onto others...

A bitter heart permits an attitude of RAGE which allows our anger to produce HARSH WORDS.

Harsh words includes both the WORDS and the MANNER of speech:

- **Sometimes our WORDS are not entirely true words**
 - They may have an element of truth but we EXAGGERATE for effect...
- **OR our words are HARSHLY-SPOKEN.**
 - Our exaggerated words are HARSHLY spoken—rude and unbecoming.
 - Or we speak in a harsh manner—YELLING.
 - Reminds me of parenting... “STOP YELLING!!”

- “STOP IT! YOU ARE BEING SO RUDE!!”

Display file “Bad Timing—Calvin & Hobbes”

- Sometimes our words are inappropriately timed

Ephesians 4:29—Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a *word* as is good for edification ***according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.***

Display file “Bad Timing—Calvin & Hobbes”

A bitter heart undermines the work of grace that God is doing in us.

- The Holy Spirit is leading us into each moment of every day.
- Bitterness begins internally and works its way out and affects our behavior.

This is why Paul says to GET RID OF IT!

Ephesians 4:31—Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, **as well as all types of evil behavior.**

These are the things that grieve the Spirit...

But too often we focus ONLY on external behavior—fixating on behavior.

We try to change our behavior, or more often we try to change others...

- **But our external behavior is rooted in our heart.**
 - A bitter heart yields bad attitude, bad words and bad behavior.
 - Good words come from a good heart, and only Jesus can make our heart good.

Paul pleads with us to let the Spirit produce the GOOD fruit that comes from good hearts.

Verse 31 shows us the source of the problem—our HEART is the problem.

Verse 32 shows us the source of the solution.

Ephesians 4:32—**Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.**

Paul lays out the pattern for forgiveness.

- And this pattern for forgiveness is seen in God’s love and forgiveness for us in Jesus.

These last several weeks have been convicting...

- I’ve had to examine my heart in the way I sometimes mishandle the truth.
- I’ve had to come to terms with the reasons why I sometimes let anger control me.
- I’ve been convicted of my harsh words and tendency to tear down with my words and sarcasm.
- I’ve had to face the fact that all too often I am NOT an encouragement to those around me...

While we have experienced conviction these past several weeks, Paul has been reminding us of God’s FORGIVENESS and NEW LIFE in Jesus.

- There is forgiveness for you in Jesus!
- There is HOPE for you in Jesus!

Paul has exposed our need for grace AND he leads us to unmeasurable grace of God!

Here in v32 we see that God HAS forgiven us!

- The end of our verse changes the way we read the whole verse!
 - If you are in Christ—if you are a Christian—there is IMMEDIATE forgiveness for you in Jesus!
 - God offers forgiveness in Jesus.

Forgiveness doesn't mean that an offense is simply swept under the rug and forgotten...

Forgiveness is not simply, "Don't worry about it" and we dismiss the wrong—NO!

God's forgiveness means He takes the FULL PENALTY for our bad behavior.

- And he suffers the penalty that we deserve out of his love for us.

Jesus suffered the penalty that we have earned in our sin in order to:

- **Preserve the holiness of God by not being permissive with sin.**
- **Preserve the heart of God to love us.**
- **Preserve our relationship with God so we can know the love of God.**
- **Preserve the image of God in us, so that we might live with and for God.**

But our passage doesn't stop with God's forgiveness for us—His CRAZY forgiveness

- This seemingly RECKLESS forgiveness...
- THIS is the standard for the forgiveness that we are to have with one another.

Ephesians 4:32—Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

- Forgiving people who have wronged us...
- Forgiving people who don't acknowledge wrongdoing...
- Forgiving "unforgivable", undeserving, unsavory people...

How the HECK do I pull THAT off??

We are able to forgive others to the degree that we know we are forgiven in Jesus.

- We can't change our ability to forgive others without God's help.
- We can't change our behavior without God's work in us.
 - Apart from the work of the Spirit, bad behavior will either run rampant in your life OR you will suffer under legalistic self-discipline.
- **Jesus does this work in us by His Spirit—CHANGING us.**
- **JESUS gives us a heart to forgive others who don't deserve forgiveness.**
 - THAT requires supernatural grace.
 - THAT forgiveness requires supernatural power.
 - THAT requires a changed heart!

Remember, THAT is what the Holy Spirit does in us:

- **Seals our identity in God's Kingdom family.**
- **Shows us the will of God.**
- **Empowering us to walk in the promises of God.**

God's forgiveness and His gift of the Spirit is both the **pattern** and the **power** for our new identity.

And, Paul says—The Spirit is God's reminder—GUARANTEE of our position in Jesus!

- Working in us to show us Jesus and lead us to Jesus and changing us to be like Jesus.

When we have patterns of hard-heartedness and patterns of behaviors that betray the Spirit's work in us, we GRIEVE and bring SORROW to the Spirit.

If you can only remember ONE THING from this sermon, remember v30:

Ephesians 4:30

... Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

In Jesus, you are CLAIMED by God as His possession!

You are in an EXCELLENT position!

- Victorious, well-supplied, well-supported, well-equipped.

That's what it means for us that we are God's own possession—we're brought from a place of GRIEVING God to bringing GLORY to God—as the children of God.

Let the Holy Spirit work in your heart.

- Confess—EVICT the bitterness and sin that lurks in dark corners.
- PUT ON Jesus—adorn Him!

You have been given a NEW, CHANGED identity—put it on!

- Sit in the love of God...
- Sit in awe of God's forgiveness.

Ask for a heart of forgiveness to forgive others