

Put On The New Man – Part 6

Ephesians 4:30-32

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.
(Ephesians 4:30-32)

May I begin today by recalling something that I have said to you on other occasions regarding these messages I bring each Sunday. That is that, it is my deepest desire and prayer that before I would preach these messages to you each week, God would first preach them to me, to my heart and to my soul to my spirit. And thankfully, He does do that!

And He has especially done that with the message last Sunday morning regarding this word “let” that is spread throughout this passage, and also regarding the concept of “releasing the power of His Holy Spirit” to do His sanctifying work in me.

And then also, to add to those words, God brought back to mind the command in James 1 that we are to . . .

22 . . . be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
(James 1:22)

And also, in Romans 2, where we read

13 for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified. (Romans 2:13)

So then, with these words as our beginning point, what must you and I do for the Holy Spirit to be able to move on forward and do His sanctifying work in us? The answer to that question will be our quest today and I pray that God will open each of our hearts to hear Him speak.

First, as we studied last week, it is clear from these scriptures that we are fully able to “resist” and to “grieve” the Holy Spirit’s power and His presence in us. Yes, He could easily force His sovereign will upon us and even crush our individual “free will” in the process. But He seems seldom ever to do that: rather He desires instead for you and me to step forward and willingly exert our own “free will” to do “His will”.

And I do earnestly desire and want and hope to always do that, to at every turn, yield my own personal will and do His will, but unfortunately, I don't do that. Too often, I fall right back into the old ways of my "old man" that I am supposed to be "putting off". And when I do, I grieve the Holy Spirit. Verse 30,

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)

Folks, simply put, you and I really can and often do resist and grieve the Holy Spirit, in so many ways . . . with the way we are, with the things we do, and with the responses we have to His efforts to sanctify our troubled souls. And as we "resist" and "grieve" Him, we also "quench" His blessed "Holy fire" that He has put within us. Those words from Luke 3,

16 John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Luke 3:16)

And in 1 Thessalonians 5 we read

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit.
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-19)

And as these words imply, all of these ways of rejection of the ministry of the Holy Spirit will hinge upon particular responses that we will have to Him as He does His work in us. And this word "let" is one of those special responses that you and I are to seek to grasp and understand.

Yes, we can be fully saved, and have God's Holy Spirit abiding within us, ready and willing to do His precious sanctifying work, but before He is able to go forward with His work, you and I must "let" Him. We must "release" the bindings and remove the hindrances and the obstacles that we have placed in His way.

Again, simply put, it is our "free will" that God is dealing with in these matters . . . and so must we! It is our "free will" that erects the obstacles and places the binding around the precious Holy Spirit and "undermines" and prevents His sanctifying work from moving forward. And that is a terrible thought folks . . . that I am able to resist and to grieve and to quench the power and the work of God's loving Spirit, whose only desire is to help me. That is a condition that we must never allow to continue within us!

Which then, brings us back to the concept that we studied about last week, that of needing to remove whatever barriers and obstacles and bindings that we have

intentionally and unintentionally placed upon the Holy Spirit, thereby “releasing” Him to do the work He needs to do.

And yes, this concept of “releasing” the power of the Holy Spirit to do His work in me is still a strange concept to me, but it sure seems to be the answer that God is speaking into my spirit, that my “free will” is a binding hindrance upon His work in me and that I must do my part in “releasing” Him to do it.

Folks, as our loving Father, God is commanding us, His sons and daughters, to “let” His Holy Spirit do His work.

May I give us one more proof regarding this concept, and it is found right here in today’s passage. Verse 31

31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31-32)

Here, immediately after we are commanded in verse 30 to not . . .

grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)

We are then commanded in verse 31 to

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. (Ephesians 4:31)

These words are not vague or confusing or otherwise unclear. By the command “let”, we are being told that we have a part that we must be diligent to play, that in some way or another we are hindering the putting away of the bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking that takes place within us. And we are to remove whatever that obstacle may be.

But note here also that this manner of wording implies that there is another involvement besides and in addition to our own. Just as we studied last week in the words of Philippians 2,

12 . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)

Notice in those words as we move from verse 12 of Philippians 2 of “working out our salvation ourselves”, and move to verse 13, the responsibility changes to another person, God himself, for the doing of the “work”. Verse 13 of Philippians 2 . . .

13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.
(Philippians 2:13)

And that is exactly what we are reading about here in verse 31 of our text. Our part is the simple part, simply to “let” God’s Holy Spirit do His work. Listen!

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. (Ephesians 4:31)

Again, my part is to “let” Him, His part is to do the “putting away of my sin”.

But folks, as I confessed to you last week, though my part be simple, I am still struggling about just how I am supposed to get about becoming the “doer” and not just a “hearer” of these very “Spiritual” instructions!

This past week, I dedicated myself to doing some very careful study on this perplexing matter. And true to form, God is always ready to provide answers when we seek, ask and knock, beginning first in my reading of a daily devotional from Oswald Chambers. In that devotional he reminded me that . . .

“Simplicity is the secret of seeing things clearly. A saint does not always think clearly, but a saint ought to see clearly without any difficulty. You cannot always think a spiritual muddle clear, often you have to obey it clear.

If there is something upon which God has put His pressure, obey in that matter, bring your imagination into captivity to the obedience of Christ with regard to it and everything will become as clear as daylight.”

With those words, I have concluded that “obedience” is the clearest path to take if I am to ever

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. (Ephesians 4:31)

But where must I begin? As I have studied these scriptures and prayed for God’s guidance, I was led right back to the words of the passage that we have been studying over these past several weeks. Here, God is defining for us how we are to go about giving up our corrupt, self-centered “free will”, of putting off the old man and putting on the new man. And here, He defines for us four specific involvements with sin that we are to put off from ourselves. And in the midst of them, in verse 30, He gives us the warning about grieving the Holy Spirit.

So, I have decided that I should take these four sinful behaviors as my beginning points. And no, these four are not a complete list, but they are a place to start.

Here, God tells us to rid ourselves of the habits and entanglements of “lying”, and of “anger”, and of “stealing” in all its many forms, and of participating in “corrupt talking”.

May I say as I go on forward with my efforts that while I keep speaking about me in this context, each one of you must also walk this pathway! It is not an option for us. It is a command from God.

And so, the place for me to begin is to simply recognize and accept that I not only have these four sinful behaviors within me, they are far more pervasive than I want to think. Yes, most of the time these behaviors are so subtle and so beguiling that I don’t even recognize that I am doing them, but I do, “do” them. I “lie”, I am an “angry” man, I “steal” and I engage in “corrupt conversation”. And I need to join with God’s Holy Spirit and “release” Him to do His work of “putting off” these sinful behaviors.

As I have prayed and beseeched the Lord to help me to know how to remove the obstacles and hindrances that prevent His Holy Spirit from doing His work, I have asked Him to reveal to me how these four sins manifest themselves in me. And as part of my prayer, I have asked the Lord how I should go about finding the answers I need. And without hesitation, God gave the clear instruction that I am to ask you, the members of our church, for your help. In James 5, we read . . .

16 Confess your trespasses, (your sins) to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:16)

And so, may I earnestly ask each of you for your help as I engage in this intimate “search” for relief from these dilemmas of sin? I know that I am only in your presence for a few hours a week, but may I request that you ask God’s Spirit to reveal some answers to you. I really need your counsel.

And as I have given my own thoughts to these four sinful behaviors, I have asked myself just how often and in what ways do these sins “slither” their way into my mind, my soul and my spirit. And for me, I believe that most of my sin finds its easiest entrance through my “pride”, my “ego”. As for lying, I find that when something I do or say is questioned, I want to do what the politicians and the media does. I put my best “spin” on it.

Isn’t that a clever subtlety? To “spin” something does not sound nearly as corrupt as “lying” about it. But folks, I don’t think that God views such expressions and behaviors as “spinning” any differently than He would “lying”. So then, while the politicians and the media and you and I call it “spinning”, God calls it lying. And yes, I do “spin” my

circumstances and behaviors to put myself in the best light. But God knows the difference.

And notice that the “spinning” ties in with the corrupt talking. There I get “two sins in one”. Sin loves company! So then yes, though I really, really don’t want to lie, I do lie and I want God’s Holy Spirit to “put off my lying” from me!

Next, yes I am an angry person? As I have confessed to you on other occasions, anger has been a prevailing sin in my life . . . instant anger at other people, drivers on the road, at my family members, at the politicians and the media, and on and on. So then, yes I need for God’s Holy Spirit to “put off my anger” from me!

And there too, my corrupt tongue is most always involved. In anger, I “rant” and complain mercilessly. The tongue truly is a “restless evil”.

Next . . . do I steal? This is also one of those very subtle sins. Though I seldom ever intentionally steal, yes, I do steal. One way that I steal makes use, once again, of one of my other sinful behaviors, my corrupt tongue. I will often “poor mouth” people in order to gain a lower, more favorable price for something I want to get or buy from them. I even invoke my many years in ministry as a proving point, as if to say to the other person that they should know that people in ministry don’t make as much money as people in secular work. All of which is lying, and stealing and corrupt conversation. The real truth is, God has provided over and above all that I could ever need in this life. I am “rich” beyond measure!

Folks, all of these thought came simply from just a few minutes of inward reflection. And I pray that God will continue to reveal more and more of my sinful ways to me.

But now, what is my next part in this very “spiritual transaction” with God? Recognizing the sin that prevails within me is only the first step. The next is I must “repent” of them. I must confess them to God and ask him to forgive me for them.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Then next, I must “renounce” those sins, else they will surely continue to reassert themselves back into my life just like they used too.

Then, I must let God do His part. I must “release” Him and “let” Him do His work of “removing” those sins from me.

And yes, the struggle with my “old self” battles against this transaction with God every step of the way. But I must be diligent to do my part and “obey” these things through. That is the way of faith.

Listen as I close!

31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. (Ephesians 4:31)

13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.
(Philippians 2:13)