

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 41 (October 4-10, 2015)

Now that we understand that God wants us to know how “wide and long and high and deep” His love is, let’s continue to study the commandments in the book of Ephesians to see how the Lord wants us to live.

Sunday, October 4 (read Ephesians 4:17-19)

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. (Ephesians 4:17)

I encounter some folks who say, “Since I am saved by God’s grace, why does He care how I live?” His grace does not give us a license to sin; instead, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, it gives us the power **not to sin**. Our printed verse commands us to change our way of living as a result of salvation. Lost people are “**darkened** in their understanding and **separated** from the life of God because of the **ignorance** that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts” (v. 18, emphasis mine). They are not sensitive to the moving of the Spirit, so they follow their natural sinful instincts and indulge in sensuality and impurity, but their lusts are never satisfied (v. 19). As we will see tomorrow, this is not God’s will for His children!

Monday, October 5 (read Ephesians 4:20-24)

You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. (Ephesians 4:20)

In recent years, my primary emphasis has been on God’s **mercy** and **grace**. I have encouraged you to take His Word at face value and to claim His promises as your own. This does not negate the need for holiness in our lives, however. You must understand that true salvation involves **repenting** of our sins and allowing the Holy Spirit to have right-of-way in our hearts (v. 22). We must change our minds about the seriousness of our sins and come to understand that we are “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (v. 23-24). This means, for example, that those who have bought into the world’s lie that it is acceptable to live together prior to marriage, will change their minds **and** their situation. When Christians begin to live according to the written Word of God, I believe we can still influence our country (see Matthew 5:13-16). Are you willing to live for Him?

Tuesday, October 6 (read Ephesians 4:25-27)

In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. (Ephesians 4:26-27)

We are approaching **my** theme verse (v. 29), so Paul hits an issue that is closely associated with it (v. 25). There are three questions you should consider when you pass information along to your neighbor: 1) is it totally true? 2) Is it necessary? 3) Can he/she quote you? If it doesn’t pass the test, then it is prohibited by this command. Next Paul tells you to avoid sin when you are angry, because your anger increases the probability of sin. Anger, in and of itself, is not sin, but we can do some harmful things to others while we’re mad. This gives Satan a foothold and leads us into much bigger problems (v. 26-27). Some of you are nearing the finish line in your journey to the Promised Land. God does not want the sun to set on your life while you are carrying a grudge. Allow Him to replace your anger with His perfect peace.

Wednesday, October 7 (read Ephesians 4:28)

He who is stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands that he may have something to share with those in need. (Ephesians 4:28)

No verse is more relevant in our **entitlement society** than the one printed above. I am not surprised that a **worldly** person would seek after free government benefits, but even some **Christians** tell me that they plan to remain unemployed until all the benefits are exhausted. This is a misuse of a government program and is an affront to a holy God! The Lord commands us to be generous to others, so we should do all we can to work with our own hands to be able to share with those who are in need. No true Christian would ever steal from another, but many people do not consider receiving benefits without actively seeking employment as stealing. In almost any field of work, if you are willing to do **more** than the job requires, you will soon be promoted and your salary will increase; therefore, seek careers that offer advancement to dedicated employees. We are called to set an example to a lost world!

Thursday, October 8 (read Ephesians 4:29)

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (Ephesians 4:29)

We have arrived at a verse that I have been striving, perhaps in my own strength, to achieve for the past twenty years or more. Now that I realize that this is **impossible** in the flesh, I am giving it over to the Holy Spirit to fulfill the command in me. Even when my comments are true, they are not always profitable to the listener. We are living in very dangerous times, so it is more important than ever that my words edify others as I exalt the Name of Jesus. When someone tells me about **their** family genes, I usually say, "Mouths run in the Browning family." This may be funny to the listener, but it is not hilarious to God who gives the command in v. 29. I challenge you to join me in watching your words closely. Eternity may hang in the balance for the hearer.

Friday, October 9 (read Ephesians 4:30-32)

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

We grieve the Holy Spirit when we do not allow Him to fulfill God's Word in us (v. 28). His job is to guide us into all truth (John 16:13a), but He cannot accomplish this task when we refuse to take the Scriptures seriously. Salvation is God's gift to us, so we cannot earn it nor lose it; however, all true believers are commanded to allow the Holy Spirit to put a searchlight on their lives. Don't miss the fact that His Spirit seals us, and no one can break that seal! Do you lack security in your salvation experience? Consider this: we are safe in the hands of the Father and the Son and no one can pluck us away (John 10:27-30). We are also filled with the Holy Spirit, who has sealed us for the day of redemption (v. 30). What are those doubts you are harboring in your heart?

Saturday, October 10 (reread Ephesians 4:30-32)

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

At the end of this chapter, Paul returns to the subject of anger as He (through the Holy Spirit) commands us to "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice" (v. 31). Can you see how the subjects of gossip and slander are tied together with the subjects of bitterness, rage, anger and brawling? It doesn't matter which one comes first; the resulting actions are the same unless God's Spirit is given control. I challenge you as I challenge myself: allow the Holy Spirit to have right-of-way in your heart. We'll soon find out that our mouths speak only what we have stored up in our hearts (see Matthew 12:34b).