

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Gospel Informed Attitudes

Ephesians 4:31-32

PowerPoint Presentation: None

Keywords: Holy Spirit, Forgiveness, Unity, Disunity, Bitterness, Kindness

Sermon Audio blurb:

I. Introduction.

- A. We started carefully looking at how Paul is describing the unique way a Christian is to comport, behave himself in this age of sin and death.
 - 1. We are not to walk and live like a non-Christian who does not know the mind and heart of God.
 - 2. We are not to be ignorant of the commands of our Lord.
 - 3. We are to be a people who faithfully live a different, God-focused life that rejects the lies that this age utters.
- B. Paul describes this like the stripping off of old, filthy clothes and putting on new clothes that are fitting and proper.
 - 1. Therefore in vs 25 we are to be a people who, having rejected the lies of this age, put on a life of truth speaking to one another.
 - 2. In vs 26 we are commanded to be angry, but only when it is appropriate and never allow that anger to define us. We are to resolve the issue that brought about that anger so that we do not let Satan gain any foothold in our heart, our homes, and our church.
 - 3. In vs 28 we are to be a people who do not steal in any sense of that word but rather we are to be hard workers who labor for the purpose of giving to those who are in genuine need
 - 4. In vs 29-30 we learned that we are to be a people who speak grace-filled words to one another. The type of speech that is good for building up others in the faith. In doing so we preserve the unity of the Holy Spirit and instead of grieving Him.
- C. Now we turn our eyes to the final point in vss 31-32.
 - 1. The easiest way to describe these are that they are examples of attitudes that should be put away and replaced by other attitudes.

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2. But that is a bit simplistic when you read 5:1-21.
 - a. Notice how the “therefore” in vs 1 functions as an inference to what Paul commanded in the prior passage, starting in 4:17.
 - b. Walking properly in this age is to imitate God. We, as individuals and as the Church, are to reflect the character and heart of God.
 - c. This in turn reminds us what was said by Paul in Ephesians 3 where God is making His wisdom known to the powers of darkness through His Church.
 - d. But as long as we take these various passages in piecemeal, forgetting the bigger point that is being made we will be able to rationalize almost all of it away with a brush of our mental hand.

Propositional Statement

Paul now admonishes and commands his readers to put away attitudes that tear down the unity of the Church and produce quarrels and hatred. Instead we are to reflect in both word and thought the spirit of God, who in His rich grace has forgiven us. Two commands, one that tells us what to discard and one that tells us what we are to be as a people called the “Church.”

II. We are to express kind-hearted forgiveness (31-32).

- A. What we are to put away (31).
 1. The command is simple, put these attitudes away from yourself.
 - a. Therefore we are not merely hearing suggestions this is a divine command of God through Paul.
 - b. No need to spend a lot of time on this. You understand it. Put these things away.
 - c. One point to observe is that the command is in the passive.
 - (1) This may indicate the reality and need to look to the Holy Spirit to give you the strength to accomplish this task. And some make that point.
 - (2) I think this is not the point because the other commands are not in the passive and yet they require the power of the Lord to accomplish them as well.
 - (3) However, none of this just happens.

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- (a) The reason we are to put these attitudes off is that they don't fit a person who belongs to God, has been saved through the death of Christ and who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
 - (b) We have been transferred out of this age and into the age to come.
 - (c) Along with this, we are constantly needing look to the Spirit to give us strength and discernment. It is never presumed that we do this merely by our own raw strength.
 - d. Having said all of that, simply embrace the reality of what it means. Put away means put away. So let's consider two aspects of this passage.
2. First we will consider the list.
- a. The first deals with an attitude, the second and third deal with dispositions (your mood, your typical temperament), the next two deal with speech and finally the last one deals with everything the first five didn't include.
 - b. Along with this, there is a movement seen in the word order. Bitterness is the very soup from which anger and wrath arise. They lead to clamor and slander. And all of it is part of plain, simple malice.
 - c. Bitterness here speaks of that sharp sensation or emotion that courses through you when an event or person comes up.
 - (1) It brings an attitude of distaste. Aristotle said that a bitter person is one who is hard to be reconciled.
 - (2) It comes because of various reasons:
 - (a) You are wronged or at least thought to be wronged and you won't truly forgive.
 - (b) You are the type who is a legalist and so you mark the failings of others and hold them against the person.
 - (c) You are a selfish person who really sees things only as they affect you. Resentment because someone failed you in some way leads to this bitterness.

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- (d) You are self-righteous thinking that you don't deserve something and therefore you hold it against the person.
- d. Anger and wrath are essentially synonyms.
 - (1) We can try to make distinctions but really it is unnecessary.
 - (2) Whether your emotions are on simmer or boiling over, these attitudes are not ones that should model your spirit.
 - (3) It is not good to be known as an angry man or woman. Your co-workers, friends and family should not describe you this way.
 - (a) The bible describes the angry man as one who will suffer punishment and that you should not try to rescue him from the consequences of his anger (Proverbs 19:19).
 - (b) To be an angry person simply shows you lack wisdom and understanding (Proverbs 14:29).
 - (c) In fact Solomon tells us, "Do not associate with a man given to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man." (Proverbs 22:24)
- e. Clamor and slander speak to how these attitudes become public.
 - (1) Clamor is just a lot of yelling and shouting.
 - (2) Slander literally speaks of blasphemy. It is speaking against a person in a way that is not true, blaspheming their character.
- f. Finally we have "malice."
 - (1) It is a catch-all term that speaks to anything evil.
 - (2) So if you feel that you are free from everything above, Paul throws this in the cover anything that our desire to wiggle and rationalize away from.
 - (3) This final term really colors the others. These are all covered in a spirit of meanness and badness.
 - (4) It defines the reality of the spirit of this age which we are to not be partakers.

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3. Second we will consider the extent.
 - a. Most of your translations will read “all” which is fine.
 - b. But it is perhaps more clear what is intended by an alternate translation, “every kind.”
 - (1) For those who are learning New Testament Greek, the adjective $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$ when it doesn’t have an article it can mean everything belonging to a class. Like “every kind of disease.”
 - (2) That is what is happening here. If it falls into the class of bitterness or anger or slander then we are to put it off.
 - c. That is something we can shrug our shoulders over at first, but if you give it time to sink in you begin to realize how big this is.
 - d. Paul is telling us that as individuals and as a body of believers we must not tolerate any of these destructive, divisive attitudes to remain.
 - (1) When you let someone else complain and be bitter about another in the church you are not helping them. You are not just letting them vent.
 - (2) You participate actively in the demonic attack against Christ’s church. You allow and give credence to the very sins for which the wrath of God shall come upon this age.
 - e. We cannot think that because we don’t “call” it bitterness or slander or whatever that somehow we are innocent. If it falls into the class of these things then it is to be put away.
 - f. This is a daily battle then as we draw near to one another and we allow each other into our lives and dreams we will have both temptation and reason to participate in these deadly attitudes. And we must be merciless in attacking them in our own hearts.
4. On the other hand, each of us will experience the thrusts of the sharp points these attacks by a brother or sister.
 - a. Do we use that as our excuse for sin? Do we then get the freedom to take on bitterness ourselves. The freedom to plot evil?
 - b. No, we are given opportunities to display the very attitudes that reflect the gospel and reflect our Lord.

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- B. What we are to be (32).
1. Notice first that these attitudes are what we are to “become.” Not merely are we to put them on or model them. They are to be what we are.
 - a. This requires then consistency in pursuing these and putting them on until they become who we are as a person.
 - b. We are to exude them so that they are not really thought about by us as much as we naturally portray them.
 - c. Much like the bitter person is unaware how much his bitterness is obvious to all to spend time with him, so too, the kind or forgiving person is unaware often how natural these become to them.
 2. To be kind is to be useful. It speaks to being well adapted to fulfill a purpose.
 - a. So we are not merely talking about sweet disposition or sunny personality.
 - b. We are talking about a person who truly shows helpfulness to others. A kind person opens a door for a person or gives them a word of encouragement when they are discouraged.
 - c. We are to be doing this to one another. How often are you this way, seriously considering how what you say or do is of use or help to another?
 - d. Remember, this is not to be an occasional thing but something you become.
 3. Tenderhearted is actually a rare word. It speaks to your inner-being and how it is disposed toward others.
 - a. Do you merely find people something to use or to provide you your desires?
 - b. Or are you given to seek their well-being and good?
 - c. A way we would describe this in our day is that “our heart goes out to so and so.”
 - d. This is impossible when you are a bitter and angry person. For a tender heart will not tolerate those attitudes. They don’t coexist well.
 4. Forgiving each other is the biggie though.

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- a. This is where true unity becomes a reality in relationships, whether in a marriage, a friendship or the Church.
 - b. To forgive starts with an attitude that has already decided on forgiveness even before a person has sought it. So that when they approach you regarding the issue it is already a done deal.
 - c. Forgiveness doesn't mean you forget. It means that you will not hold it against them nor bring it up as a charge again.
 - d. Basically there are two options regarding when you are sinned against:
 - (1) You simply choose to overlook it and not hold it against the person.
 - (2) If that is not possible you go to the person to speak to them, which is the beginning of the process of church discipline as spelled out in Matthew 18.
 - (3) But either way, the goal is reconciliation and forgiveness.
 - e. This assumes that you will sin against another and will be sinned against.
 - f. But when you are slandered or cheated it can be hard to forgive. And here is where we begin to be tempted to say, "But you don't understand." And that may be true.
 - (1) But Paul adds "Just as" and what follows destroys any excuse you might have.
 - (2) The forgiveness is to extend to the same level that God forgave you in Jesus Christ.
 - (3) God has been infinitely offended and sinned against. You were deserving infinite, eternal wrath. But in Christ He forgave you.
 - g. And unforgiving Christian is one who has forgotten their roots and forgotten the gospel.
- C. Practical implications.
- 1. First, this requires that we be in community with one another. Fellowship is not an option.
 - a. The temptation for many is to draw away from others.

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- b. Countless times I have watched the gradual withdrawal of people from any true relationships in the church. Never for their good.
 - c. Only as you are rubbing elbows and interacting in a manner that is beyond small talk will you find yourself in the position to choose kindness over anger.
 - d. In fact, to be frank, if you don't find yourself having to choose which attitude you are going to have toward another brother or sister in Christ then you are likely playing things too safe.
2. Second, God is as interested in the holiness of our attitudes and thoughts as He is with our actions.
 3. Third, only as we keep the gospel close to our thoughts will this battle with our attitudes make sense.
 4. Fourth, this is less about you as an individual and more about the unity of the Spirit.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Paul's statement to King Agrippa in Acts 26:16-20.
 1. Note the call of the gospel is that through Jesus we can break free from this broken, sin-darkened age. We can be forgiven and we can receive the eternal inheritance with all who are set apart by faith in Christ. This is the essential message we read in Ephesians.
 2. But also note that vs 20 does not leave this call to believe and promise of salvation merely in the realm of faith. He puts feet to it all.
- B. This is what Paul is doing and will continue to do throughout the rest of Ephesians, call all who claim Jesus to show their change of mind and hope by doing deeds that are appropriate.
 1. He doesn't leave us guessing what that looks like. He spells it out cleanly.
 2. Therefore we reflect each day and each moment of each day either that we are by faith living, working, talking and thinking in accordance to this fallen age or the age to come.
- C. When we choose kindness rather than vengeance we reflect the grace of our Lord who showed us kindness in our rebellion.
- D. When we live in a spirit of conscious, consistent forgiving rather than bitterness and anger we again reflect the grace of God in Jesus Christ. We, who were once dead in our sins were now made alive in Christ. For by grace we were saved.

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- E. Beloved, it is cheap and easy to be embittered, angry or slanderous, these are the attitudes of this age.
- F. But it takes courage and confidence that our Lord is returning and will make all things new and this age will be put away for you and I to choose the attitudes listed here that reflect the age to come.

Community Group Questions

- **What challenges were found in this sermon for you? Why? How can the CG help you to put away certain things and become others?**
- **Talk about how these attitudes are either promoting unity within MDF or not? How do you help the church to model and grow in the proper attitudes?**