

Trinity XIX

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[0 : 01] Here in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 30 we read, And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

This is a very straightforward admonition to the church, not only in Ephesus, but for all of us as well. So how do we grieve the Holy Spirit?

St. Paul says we grieve God when we act in a way that is contrary to our baptismal faith and life in Jesus Christ.

He says here in verses 17 and 18 of Ephesians chapter 4, I say therefore and testify in the Lord that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because the blindness of their heart.

What St. Paul is simply saying is that we shouldn't live like the pagan and unbelieving world around us. Here in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 19, Paul says that the world, and when he talks about the world he means that opposition to Christ, those that oppose Christ.

[1 : 27] He says that the world give themselves over to lewdness or as the old King James says, lasciviousness. Lasciviousness.

This word lasciviousness or lewdness here simply means sexual activity and lust that is outside the confines of marriage.

This includes adultery, fornication, pornography, and any sexual expression outside of the sacramental union of holy matrimony.

This also includes shacking up or living together or any homosexual activity. You see, we belong to God and we are called to be controlled by the Spirit of God.

Whenever we engage in such activity, such sinful activity, we grieve the Spirit of God because we are desecrating our bodies which were made to worship God, being made in the image of God, so that we become the temple of God.

[2 : 37] The reason why St. Paul emphasizes the body is because too often the church falls prey to this very Gnostic understanding of body and soul.

And I would say American Christianity really falls prey to this. We often think God saved our souls. He punched our ticket and that's all that matters.

What we do with our body then is seen as irrelevant or secondary. St. Paul says the opposite. In verses 22 through 24 of Ephesians chapter 4, we read, Put off, put off concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind that you put on a new man, which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness.

Before we go any further, I need to say that God is not some cosmic killjoy. He's not some angry Puritan on a cloud trying to rob us of joy.

That's not who God is. No, the opposite is true. Our Lord is calling us out of a life of sin that spirals into acting like wild beasts to now putting on Christ, the language of baptism that Paul uses here in Ephesians, which is a life controlled by the Holy Spirit.

[4 : 14] When we give in to our base desires, we become further and further enslaved to sin. We become captives, bondage, prisoners to sin.

And of course, that's not freedom. That is the opposite of freedom. Such sinful behavior grieves the spirit of God. We need to ask ourselves, are we happier in the aftermath of the sexual revolution in this country?

Well, let me ask another question. Can anyone say that the sex trafficking epidemic in this country is not a real problem? With what's going on in the news with P. Diddy and all of this, the Epstein issue, how about porn?

Is that not wrecking young people? Why is it that a husband or even a wife can be so aloof and distant to their spouse physically?

Is it because they are selfishly robbing one another from the most intimate act in marriage for some stranger on a screen? This whole conversation might make us blush with embarrassment.

[5 : 36] I've dreaded this sermon all week, just to be honest with you. But St. Paul does not shy away from such matters. That's what he's talking about when he talks about lasciviousness or lewdness.

And let me just say this. The sexual revolution in its aftermath has created absolute havoc in so many ways. Not to mention the fact that some 70 million babies have lost their lives in this country.

And the overwhelming numbers stem from people being ruled by their passions, which ends in death. So enough with the safe and tame sermonettes or homiletical talks.

Again, St. Paul does not shy away from such matters. Why? Because the war that we fight is bigger than politics or who has power.

And although the war we wage is not against flesh and blood, it manifests itself in a real physical battle, waged against our minds, against our bodies, in order to lead us into further rebellion, further despair, further unbelief.

[6 : 54] And that's exactly what Satan wants. But St. Paul does not just merely give us a sex talk this morning. He says that we are to put off lying.

We're to be truth tellers. We're to put off lying by speaking the truth. A physical activity. He says that we should not be wrathful people.

Instead, we should seek to encourage and to edify, to build up while speaking the truth. Again, a physical activity. St. Paul says we shouldn't steal.

Rather, we should work with our own hands in order to give to others in need. You guessed it. Another physical activity.

We are called to be kind, compassionate people, forgiving one another. Once again, a physical thing we are called to do. Our bodies matter.

[7 : 57] They are a gift from God to honor God, not to indulge ourselves in every passion like some wild beast. Friends, we should seek to make a goal, or allow me to use the Anglican lingo, a rule for our lives.

Are you ready for it? I think we should seek to be the most irrelevant people in this world in which we live. Let me rephrase that.

I think we should seek to be the most irrelevant people in this world in which we live. You see, being a fool for Christ, especially the day in which we live, is seeking to be a self-controlled, a disciplined follower of Jesus.

While we await for our deliverance, or as St. Paul says, the day of our redemption, the return of our Savior. We are to be the people of God by living in continuity with our baptismal grace, seeking to put off perversion and wickedness that surrounds us, that bombards us, so that the Holy Spirit brings us into greater conformity with our Savior, our Lord, and our King, Jesus the Christ.

The world will laugh at you as they become further and further enslaved to their passions, thereby not only becoming more perverse, but more violent.

[9 : 41] And the sole purpose of Satan, who is the great deceiver, is to breed confusion and chaos, because his ultimate end is utter destruction.

But we are called to live lives of putting off the way of destruction, the way that leads to death, and to put on Christ, living in our baptismal grace.

Therefore, may our collect or prayer of the day be our mission, as we prayed earlier, and as we'll pray every day this week. O God, for as much as without Thee, we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit, that Thy Holy Spirit in all things may direct and rule our hearts through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.