

SERMON NOTES **EPHESIANS 4:28-30**
HONEST WORK AND EDIFYING WORDS

INTRODUCTION

Our work and our words are very important to God. What we do with our lives and say with our lips is either a testimony to the grace of God or a lie about the God we profess.

WORK HARD SO THAT YOU CAN GIVE TO THE NEEDY (verse 28)

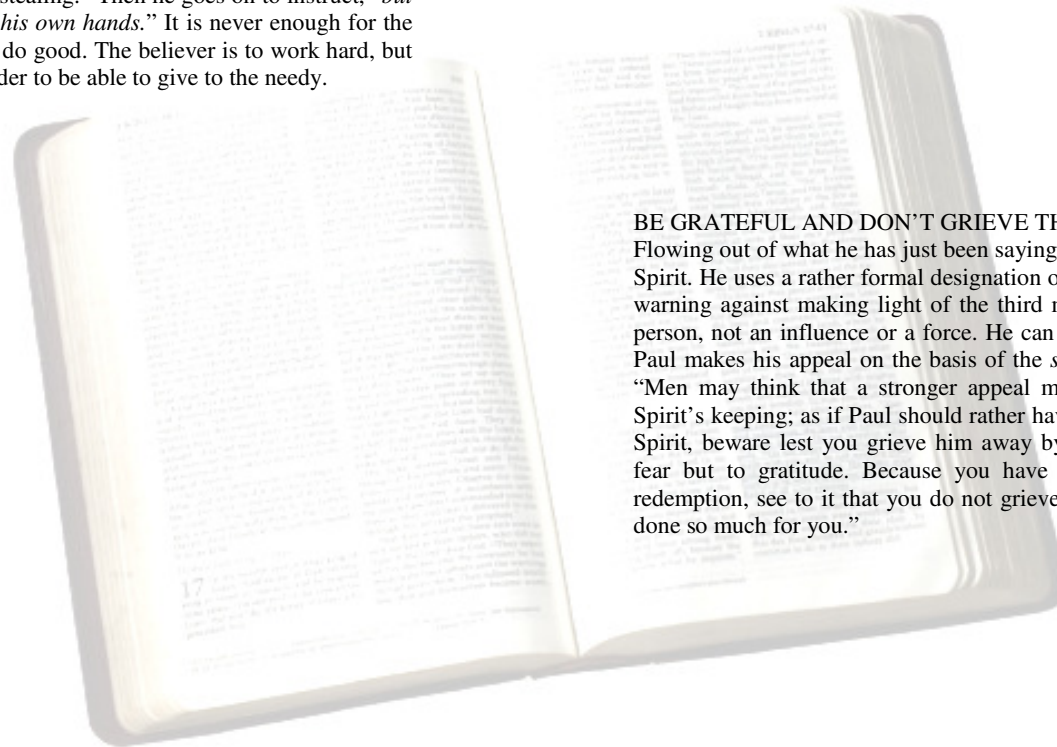
Stealing is endemic to the human race, especially where the gospel is little known, and so when Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers he was constrained to write “*Let the thief no longer steal.*” Many of the Ephesian believers were from pagan backgrounds, many were poor and many were slaves. Such people were notoriously light fingered. When they became Christians they did not automatically stop stealing. Long-entrenched habits do not simply cease. And so Paul says, “Stop stealing.” Then he goes on to instruct, “*but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands.*” It is never enough for the believer to stop doing evil; he is positively to do good. The believer is to work hard, but not to accumulate goods for himself, but in order to be able to give to the needy.

SPEAK WISELY SO THAT YOU BUILD UP THOSE WHO HEAR YOU (verse 29)

Paul turns his mind here to our speech. He urges literally, “*Let no rotten word come out of your mouth.*” The word rotten, or corrupting, is a vivid expression. We often think of it as referring to “bad language,” coarse language, blasphemy and swearing, but it is wider than this and refers to any speaking which harms other people. It includes gossip and slander. Words are incredibly powerful. We can build people up or tear them down. Paul speaks here about our words “*giving grace to those who hear.*” By well-chosen, kind, godly words, appropriate to the occasion, we can be channels through which God’s grace flows to others.

BE GRATEFUL AND DON’T GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT (verse 30).

Flowing out of what he has just been saying Paul writes that we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit. He uses a rather formal designation of the Spirit – “*the Holy Spirit of God.*” Paul is warning against making light of the third member of the godhead. The Holy Spirit is a person, not an influence or a force. He can be offended. But it is perhaps surprising that Paul makes his appeal on the basis of the *security* of the believer. B.B. Warfield writes, “Men may think that a stronger appeal might be based on fear lest we fall from the Spirit’s keeping; as if Paul should rather have said, ‘Because you can be kept only by the Spirit, beware lest you grieve him away by sinning.’ But Paul’s actual appeal is not to fear but to gratitude. Because you have been sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption, see to it that you do not grieve, bring pain or sorrow to this Spirit, who has done so much for you.”



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