Ephesians 4:25-5:2

A Fragrant Walk – Part 1

Sermon final

There are texts in Scripture that God uses to provide a heart checkup. This is one of those kinds of passages. It's kind of like walking over coals as you read it, "ooh, ah, ouch." When I was younger I would go to the doctor and it was like a drive through - in and out - now they are checking everything. It's easy to approach this passage like a drive through checkup – "don't lie. Don't get angry. Don't steal. Check!". But if this morning you allow the Spirit to cause you to linger, the Spirit of God just might reveal some deeper issues.

Look again at 5:1-2 – We have a glorious umbrella of grace overshadowing this whole text like a bookend on the list of commands: **Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.** A true child seeks to copy his or her father, but often fails to do so….but Christ **"gave Himself up for us"** – if you have put your faith in Jesus, you can walk away this morning with a clean bill of health that has been washed in the blood of Jesus. You can come to the doctors appointment dragging your feet, knowing there will be things to work on…or you can come excited, and expecting the Spirit of God is going to show you some things to work on…but that you already have a clean bill of health in Jesus. Where I see failure this morning, I can also see the glory of God's mercy and grace in Christ. God doesn't love me based on my performance, but based on the performance of Jesus. Jesus performed all perfectly.

God is our Father, and we are to be "**imitators of God, as beloved children"** – by the power of the Holy Spirit God WILL produce these characteristics within us overtime. It's easy to see this list as simply a list of commands (which they are!). This is also a list of invitations to copy your heavenly Father. Not only a "got to" but also a "get to". I GET to be a man of truth, as as my Father is true, I GET to become a man of self-control as my Father is always controlled in His anger. I GET to give and be a conduit of grace, as my Father pours out grace into my life.

So be convicted, but don't be discouraged; and glory in the gospel with me.

I want to look at three things in vv.26-28 this week, and God willing my next sermon will finish the rest.

Walk in Authenticity (4:25)

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Remember that Paul just said in vv.22-24 that we are to "put off" and "put on" certain things. Paul here gives a picture of someone undressing, and re-dressing in new clothing – "**having put away falsehood (put off), let each one of you speak the truth (put on)". My old self is a liar, and sadly, I frequently bring those old rags out to wear.** To think of how many times I have lied, and how for each lie I am deserving of God's wrath. God has a ledger that keeps record of all my lies, each lie recorded and written down by God who sees all and who has a book that keeps accounts – my ledger could fill all the books of the world!

Do you know something that God will never do…He will never lie. God will always be truthful. His Words are pure truth. If you ever think God has lied to you or failed you, you probably misunderstood what His promise was. Can you imagine a man living His entire life and never telling a single lie? Jesus did that. Because Jesus walked in perfect truth, you are clothed in His perfect ledger of truth. I have a clean ledger, because God has cleansed my slate with the blood of Jesus.

Paul tells us why we should speak truth – "for we are members of one another". Paul keeps pointing us back to this reality in Ephesians. Members of the body of Christ are called to walk together in truth and with purpose. When I lie to my brother or sister, I am slowing down the body's opportunity to move! Don't prevent the movement of the body of Christ through lying!

Notice I said "walk in authenticity". Truth-telling is more than simply "never speaking a lie". If I limit truth-telling to "never tell a lie", I might think, "check!" But let's linger a bit here. **What about the lie of hypocrisy? The word for hypocrisy has its etymology in the idea of "putting on a mask to act". I so often act! I put on the mask! When I do this, I am living a lie.**

Church, think about this: when you don't give to the world your *true self* – I'm talking about the good self, the self that God is creating - ***aren't you lying?*** Do you believe that God is writing a beautiful story in your life? Aren't you then robbing the world of that beautiful story that God is writing in your life when you try to be someone else or try to be who others expect or even want you to be?

God made YOU, He had a vision when He made YOU…who are YOU to try to rob God of His vision?! When YOU try to be someone else you are lying, and you are robbing the world of something beautiful that God is doing. Are you afraid to be yourself? You just seek to fit in…like a chameleon that adapts to their surroundings. Are you afraid to say what you truly think even when God is putting it on your heart? Why do I lie? Often it's because I care way too much what others think…so I plug in the safe response. The body can't move as well as God intends it to move unless you live truthfully because no one can be YOU but YOU. Each body part matters, but each part needs to walk in authenticity.

Do you remember the first lie that came from the devil - "God doesn't want what's best for you!" Do you remember what happened next…Adam and Eve realized they were naked, and they hid themselves from one another. There is an intimate link between Satan's lie and hiding and covering ourselves.

Look back up at 4:24 – Paul says that in Christ you are "created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness", God is rewriting your story. You are uniquely and divinely created in the image of God…and your broken places have been redeemed…and God is putting them back together…you now GET to be truthful and to live out your true self.

Will you make a commitment right now, today, to be truthful with who God called you to be? Aren't you tired of telling a lie and trying to be someone else? Walk authentically, and be courageous and truthful to show to the world the beautiful story that God is re-writing.

Identify my sinful anger (4:26-27)

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

Paul gives three commands here, one positive, and two negative. The first command is positive – "be angry". This is actually a command to be angry, however, the second, negative command is "do not sin". So Paul has sinful anger in mind. There is a good type of anger – God is spoken of as being angry all throughout Scripture. In 1 Kn. 11:9 The Lord "was *angry with* Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the Lord". Jesus was angry when He was in the temple and they were selling what the people needed for worship. In anger He overturned the tables and created a massive commotion. However, when God is angry, it is always measured, it is always a perfect and just anger, and God is never out of control. Our anger is flawed, often unjust, we don't always see the full picture, we lose sight of our own plank while looking at the speck of others, and often anger causes us to lose control.

Paul is quoting Psalm 4:4 - *"Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent"*. How should I resolve anger? I am to "ponder" or "identify" what the root cause of it is. The Greek version of Psalm 4:4 uses a word that means "to be cut to the heart". I need to be cut to the heart by God regarding my own anger as I ponder and identify what the root cause is. James is very helpful with this: (if you struggle – Jam. 4:1-8)

> ***What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? (James 4:1)***

Quarrels have the ability to reveal *idolatry* – "passions" that have become idols "at war within you". A few verses later James calls them "adulterers and adulteresses" because

idolatry is adultery to God! I have replaced God with something that has become such a strong desire, that to go without it causes me to lash out on the other person

I am driving, and someone is *actually going the speed limit*…the audacity! And my blood begins to boil…but what is really being exposed is my idolatry of impatience. What about social media. People quarrel on social media because we idolize being right. I need this person to see my point! So I become angry, and I say stupid things that ironically completely discredit any logical statements I may have made.

Sinful anger exposes idolatry. If you had a dead body buried in your backyard…wouldn't you want to know that? Sinful anger then becomes an opportunity to have idolatry, which I HATE and which GOD HATES, to be "unearthed".

I worship comfort, so I'm angry when people rob me of it. I worship myself, so I'm angry when someone pushes me out of the way or hurts me. I worship approval, so I'm angry when someone makes me look stupid or exposes my faults. But Jesus' anger was perfect…He worshipped God, so He was angry that His HOLY temple was being desecrated!

Paul says, "do not let the sun go down on your anger". Paul could be drawing upon a principle in the law that all hired servants were required to be paid *before the sun went down* (Deut. 24:15). This was to ensure that managers didn't withhold pay from their workers. Paul wants us to deal with anger expediently, before the sun goes down. This does not mean, as I thought for years, that I need to solve the problem with the person before the sun goes down. But what I do need to do is to settle this with God… lest I **"give the devil opportunity".** The word for "opportunity" is "τοπος", which can mean a "location" or "place". The NKJV reads, "do not give *place* to the devil", and even better, the NIV – "and do not give the devil a *foothold".*

Sinful anger, if not checked can create within me a "foothold" of the devil. Some people have allowed the devil to create a stronghold of anger in their lives and it can become a regular and consistent source of demonic oppression and spiritual warfare.

I want to give you an acronym that will hopefully help you when your blood starts to boil: PIN. Pause, Identify, take the Necessary step. Whenever I detect that I am angry, I need to stick a "pin" in it. First, I need to pause. How many quarrels and situations will be prevented if I would simply pause. Close the oven door! The oven door called MY MOUTH. Shut the door…pause, and get alone with God. Remove yourself, quickly, from the situation lest you open the oven door and burn the whole house down! ***The next step is the most important, Identify.*** Through prayer, through self-reflection, I need to ask myself, "what is the root cause of my anger?" I need to ponder on my bed, and ask the Lord to "cut my heart". Is there an idol within me that is being exposed?" What is the button that is being pushed? Is it a good

button? Is there a good desire, but I am looking for it to be fulfilled in the wrong way? Am I not trusting God to fulfill a longing within? Is my anger selfless or selfish? Am I acting out in passive aggression? ***The final step is to take the "necessary" step.*** Is there a sin I need to confess to the individual? Do I need to give the person space? What is the best way to approach them? Ask permission to talk. if someone isn't ready to talk, that is a very valid thing! When you stick a pin in your anger…you allow time and space for the Holy Spirit to move within you and within the other person to pray and to address the situation in a healthy way.

Last heart checkup…

Labor to live…*and to give* (4:28)

> **Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.**

Don't be a thief, rather work hard to live, and even more to give. Notice Paul says, "don't just work hard to make a living, lay aside ***so that you can give to others***." **John tells us in 1 John 3:17 – "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 Jn. 3:17).**

The word for labor means "to sweat hard". This can mean physical or mental work. There is a good blessing that comes from a hard day's work. Jesus said, "my Father is always working and I am working". God has called me to work hard! To feel the blessing of a good day's work and to sleep restfully at the end of a hard day. There is a peace, there is a blessing that comes from working hard.

Paul says, "do honest work with your hands" – most people are willing to do that. But Paul calls us as Christians to an extraordinary ethic – "do honest work *so that* I may have something to share with someone in need!" No longer steal, labor hard…and not just to live, but to give!

What would happen if I started to put money aside for an emergency fund, but not my own emergency's, but of others? You know what would happen? I would be filled with great joy as I just handed it over…nothing in return, no expectations to have it paid back. Just HERE! This is a good type of joy! Jesus said, It is more BLESSED (happy!) to give than to receive. This is a good type of joy we are to pursue!

River Ridge Spring Grove is about to have to refinance their building, if they do, the interest is going to skyrocket and they'll have to draw funds from places where money is already allotted. So we are praying for God to provide the money to pay it off, and they are asking the church to give…again, above and beyond what I normally give to this church.

Here's the thing…every bit matters. There is a glorious principle of Scripture that we see in the OT and the NT. Paul says:

> **whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. [if you give little of yourself, God will not entrust much for you to give] 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. (2 Cor. 9:6-8)**

You know what happens if I fail to give…I will become covetous, and discontent and I will hold all that God gives to me with closed hands. I will miss out on the blessing of being a conduit of God's grace! Paul is not preaching a prosperity gospel…like some get rich scheme…give to get more. That's idolatry of money. Paul says, "give so that you can receive from God, *so that you can give more*" – that's being a conduit of God's grace. As you use what God has given you – time, treasure, talents – God expands each of these to be used to a greater degree.

What prevents people from giving of their resources to others? *procrastination* – "one day God, I will use my resources…when I have more time, more money, more ability…just not now, *just not in this season* God." You know what will happen? You will most likely never give of yourself. Give what you have to give…not what you do not have, and ask God to expand what He has given you so that you can give more. May God make us wise stewards of all that He has entrusted to us…none of it is ours! All is grace.

Here is God's word to us today: walk authentically, identify sinful anger, and labor to live…and to give.

In closing: If you are here, and you have not surrendered your life to Jesus, you have two options: The first option is impossible…just be perfect in every way…that's all. Never ever tell a lie. Never ever be angry without cause. Never ever withhold what you have to give to others. Keep the ledger against you totally clean! No problem! **Second option: allow your dirty ledger to be cleansed by Jesus. You may think you'll make it to Heaven because you are a "good person": You may be a great person…I'm sure you're far greater than me…but God doesn't grade on a curve! No one will walk away with a clean bill of health when they stand before God unless they have put their faith in Jesus and been cleansed by His blood. This morning, surrender to Jesus and receive God's grace and mercy.**

One final word: SING TRUTHFULLY! If you've been redeemed by Jesus, SING TRUTHFULLY! One day we will all sing before God and none of us will care what others think on that day. Don't be shy! Don't hold back your worship because of what others might think of you. He died for you! That changes everything! Sing truthfully as we now sing together!