

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS-NOVEMBER 7, 2021

Pastor Lori was away this weekend, so here is a short devotion instead of the regular sermon.

EPHESIANS 4:25-5:2 OFFERS CHRISTIANS A SUMMARY OF HOW TO LIVE AS THOSE WHO LOVE THE LORD AND HAVE BECOME HIS FOLLOWERS. IN THIS PASSAGE PAUL INSTRUCTS BELIEVERS TO "PUT AWAY" THE THINGS THAT OFFER A POOR WITNESS TO CHRIST. SUCH THINGS ALSO TAKE AWAY FROM THE BLESSINGS OF EARTHLY LIFE, RATHER THAN ENHANCING THEM.

THE LIST OF THOSE THINGS INCLUDE: UNCONTROLLED ANGER THAT LEADS TO SINFUL WORDS OR ACTIONS, HATRED, MALICE, BITTERNESS, GOSSIP, AND OTHER WORDS THAT TEAR DOWN INSTEAD OF BUILD UP. WE OF COURSE CANNOT HELP HOW WE FEEL, BUT WE CAN CHOOSE TO NURTURE OUR FEELINGS OR NOT. FEELING ANGER, HATRED, BITTERNESS, ETC. ARE EMOTIONS. RECOGNIZING OUR FEELINGS IS HELPFUL SO THAT WE DO NOT CONTINUE TO INFLAME A FEELING THAT RISES UP WITHIN US.

ACTING ON OUR FEELINGS, IS WHAT LEADS TO SIN. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE WHEN THOSE FEELINGS MOTIVE US TO DO OR SAY, THINGS THAT DISPLEASE GOD, WHICH INCLUDES HURTING OTHERS, IN ANY WAY. ANOTHER WAY WE LET OUR EMOTIONS CAUSE US TO SIN HAPPENS WHEN CERTAIN FEELINGS TOWARDS OTHER PEOPLE PREVENT US FROM DOING THE GOOD THINGS GOD CALLS US TO DO.

AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE CHOICES WE CAN MAKE WHEN IT COMES TO THE EMOTIONS LISTED IN THE PASSAGE FROM EPHESIANS IS FOUND IN THE HUMAN HAND. A HAND MADE INTO A FIST CAN SYMBOLIZE POWER AND THE WILL TO EXERT IT OVER OTHERS OPPRESSIVELY. A FIST MAY ALSO SYMBOLIZE THE BITTERNESS, ANGER, SLANDER, MALICE, AND OTHER FEELINGS WE ARE SUPPOSED TO LET GO OF.

FURTHERMORE, OTHER THAN TO PUNCH OR LIFT UP A FIST IN A SIGN OF VICTORY OR DEFIANCE, THERE IS NOT MUCH WE CAN DO WITH A FIST. HOLDING ONE'S HAND IN A FIST IF ONE DOES SO TIGHTLY CAN EVEN HURT BY CRAMPING THE HAND OR MAKING NAIL MARKS IN THE PALM.

CONVERSELY AN OPEN HAND CAN SYMBOLIZE WELCOMING, OR SAYING GOODBYE. IT CAN HOLD THINGS SO OTHER MAY SEE, OR HOLD ANOTHER HAND. AN OPEN HAND CAN ALSO BE LIFTED UP TO PRAISE THE LORD. IN THESE WAYS AND MORE IT IS THE OPPOSITE OF A FIST.

THUS THE FIST AND OPEN HAND CAN BE USED BY US TO EXPRESS AND EVEN CONTROL OUR EMOTIONS. WHEN FEELING THINGS THAT CAN LEAD TO SIN, THE FIRST THING TO DO IS ACKNOWLEDGE THE FEELINGS, THEN PRAY ABOUT THEM. AN EXERCISE IN RELEASING WHAT WE DO NOT WISH TO CAUSE US TO SIN CAN BE DONE WITH A HAND.

MAKE A TIGHT FIST, THEN SLOWLY OPEN YOUR HAND, AS YOU DO SO-PRAY FOR A RELEASE OF THE EMOTIONS THAT CAN BE HARMFUL. THIS CAN BE DONE OVER AND OVER AGAIN, UNTIL WE FIND OURSELVES BETTER ABLE TO IMITATE CHRIST AND SHARE HIS LOVE EVEN WITH OTHERS.

THE CLOSING VERSES OF THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS OFFERS A FITTING PRAYER TO CLOSE THIS DEVOTION: "PEACE BE TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY, AND LOVE WITH FAITH, FROM GOD THE FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. GRACE BE WITH ALL WHO HAVE AN UNDYING LOVE FOR OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST." AMEN