

It's About Time...

...You Healed An Old Wound

Ephesians 4:30-32

This morning I want to continue in our study of "It's About time." We have so far seen three things we need to stop talking about and do in each of our lives. 1. It's about time we kept our promise to God. To live our lives fully devoted to God as we committed ourselves to him when we asked him to come and be our God. 2. It's about time we threw away materialistic clutter, things that tie up our time and our resources, especially becoming more satisfied with this world than in our own relationship with God.

Last week, we saw that it is about time we killed that persistent sin, that attitude of the heart that drives a wedge between us and God. We need to eliminate any distraction, any thing that will lead us down the road of temptation, and prepare ourselves so that we aren't easily tripped up again. This morning it is about time we healed an old wound. My topic is about relationships and we find our text in **Ephesians 4:30-32**. Anyone here ever been wounded by a relationship?

You and I were created to have relationships with other people. If that wasn't the case, you would be the only person living on the face of this earth. Yet with relationships comes a sense of vulnerability. We reveal a little bit of ourselves to someone else in the hopes that it will draw us closer together, but how many of us know that it isn't always the case. Sometimes people turn against us, and the next thing you know we are bandaged with hurts that can leave a lasting impact on the rest of life.

Relationships can be very difficult. Sometimes they can be rewarding and inspiring while others can be draining and dragging. But for all of us here this morning I want to talk about those relationships that have brought us pain – those people who have wounded us. As each of us sit here this morning we are surrounded by relationships that wound us to some degree. By wounding I mean they effect us in a negative way and hold us back from being truly free.

Wounds come in many forms – disappointments, disagreements, abuse (verbal/physical), insensitivity, arrogance, embarrassment, and even belittlement. **Sometimes these wounds are unintentional, ignorant, unseen and unprovoked and yet others are full on malicious attacks.** These wounds can either keep us prisoner, or we can find healing and freedom from them.

Everyone of us have been wounded at some point in time – in childhood, or maybe even just yesterday. Yet, I also believe that **we have wounded others at some point in time**. Relationships are hard because it means that we take a chance of being hurt time and time again. This morning, the Apostle Paul gives us instructions about relationships and he shows us that there are two ways we can approach relationships. Let's read our text together this morning:

30 And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

1. Man's Way

The first way we can approach relationships is the same way we have approached them since the beginning – in our sinful flesh we get hurt we hold a grudge, we get hurt we allow that hurt to turn into bitterness. And when the seed of bitterness is watered in our hearts it controls our lives and turns us into everything God sets himself against.

In fact, as we look at this text in Ephesians we find a pattern that is laid out of us. Look at verse 31.

a. Bitterness is the resentment, the un-forgiveness, and rooted anger within one's heart.

With it comes the idea that it is all about me – I'm right, I don't make mistakes, I want someone to pay. Bitterness is all about being self-centered and that is the root problem within a man's heart. **James 3:14-16** tells us:

14 But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. 15 For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. 16 For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.

Bitterness is the beginning, which then leads to rage or wrath,

b. Rage or Wrath according to the original Greek text is defined as emotionally acted out bitterness.

Like the tantrum of a child, we lose control and we fall to the ground like a flailing 2 year old. We as adults don't do that do we? **Proverbs 14:17** tells us:

17 Short-tempered people do foolish things

c. Anger is elevated bitterness that comes out in words and actions.

d. Harsh words and slander – speech in arrogance and words intended to hurt.

The tongue is quite powerful isn't it? **James 3:3-5** tells us:

3 We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. 4 And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. 5 In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches.

Our tongue can do so much damage, yet at the same time it can bring such life and hope. **Proverbs 15:4** tells us:

4 As a tree gives fruit, healing words give life, but dishonest words crush the spirit.

Many lives have been tortured by words. People may live their whole lives reliving words that were spoken 10, 20, 30 years ago. And sometimes, as human beings, we know how to say the most painful things.

I wish I could say that people who come to churches weren't guilty of this, but we allow our anger and dislike of the world to come out judgmental, arrogant, and we think that through harsh words we will turn people to God. Our harsh words will only remind people of harsh words spoken to them in the past. In **1 Timothy 6:4** Paul warned Timothy of those who would come into the church and present a misguided Gospel. He said about them:

Such a person has an unhealthy desire to quibble over the meaning of words. This stirs up arguments ending in jealousy, division, slander, and evil suspicions.

Harsh words and slander, according to our text leads to other types of evil behavior, but in the New King James Version it states, "with all malice." Anger and bitterness, leads to us acting out, which then leads to malice, or revenge.

e. Anger and Bitterness leads to Revenge.

No where is there a greater example of the progression of man's pride and anger than in the life of Cain. Cain and Abel were brothers and while God accepted Abel's sacrifice God didn't accept Cain's because it wasn't the best of what he had. Cain becomes angry and his anger eventually turns into revenge. But look at God's warning to Cain in **Exodus 4:7**:

Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.

If one isn't careful, they can allow the hurts of the past to become their controlling master. That will in turn effect every relationship they will ever have, and their influence may not be beneficial. Clearly none of us want our lives to be controlled by our bitterness, our arrogance, or our need for revenge. Man's way leads to himself, to revenge, while God's way leads to release and freedom.

According to our text, God's way of dealing with relationships is to find another motivating factor other than pride and bitterness. We are to find a new way through our new lives that is available with God's Spirit living in us. The idea of grieving the Holy Spirit is found in not living out our new life in Christ. God has given us a different way to live and when we don't it grieves the heart of God. The difference in how we deal with our relationships shows others that we have had a change in our lives.

We also know that we have this new life within us when we begin to deal with our relationships differently. What is God's way of dealing with relationships?

2. God's Way

According to our text, it all begins with kindness. Just as God enhanced our relationship with him through kindness, we are to do the same. A commentary defines:

a. Kindness - "to be considerate of others, never putting anyone through needless pain."

God has always told us to think of others, even to the point of thinking more about them than ourselves. It is amazing how our society doesn't seem to be thinking about the people around them. We see it in the way people drive, how they stand in line, how we treat those in need, and even how we deal with the elderly – there is no sense of responsibility to our fellow man, every man for himself.

But at times there are glimmers of hope. You can't defend yourself from kindness – it has a way of working its way into your heart. **Romans 12:10** tells us:

¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

It is our role as followers of Jesus to lead the way in how we treat others. The next step is:

b. Be Tenderhearted – to be compassionate, merciful, having a tender sense of the sufferings of others.

To be tenderhearted is to be moved in the very pit of our stomach (original Greek). As I have pointed out, time and time again, we see in the earthly ministry of Jesus, times when he was so moved by what he saw that he did a miracle, or gave a word of warning, or reached out to someone. **Psalm 145:9** tells us:

⁹ The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.

Our lives are not just about our accomplishments, or work, or our wants and desires – it is also about reaching out to the people around us - when someone around us is hurt, or in need,

or struggling, we are moved within to help or do what we can. Finally this morning, the third way to treat our relationships is with

c. Forgiveness – Giving up my right of repayment for any wrong done against me.

We are told just as we have been forgiven, so we are to forgive. Is it as easy as that? No, many times it is the hardest thing to do. Those who have been forgiven should possess a forgiving spirit, and should forgive just as God has forgiven, sincerely, readily, cheerfully and forever.

But I think there is a key element that many miss when it comes to forgiveness – if we are to forgive as we have been forgiven by God, at what point does God forgive us? Is it when we still have a chip on our shoulder and remain arrogant? Is it immediate when we sin? **God forgives is at the point of repentance – the point when we turn away from our past and surrender to God.**

Now there may be some people we will never be able to hear words of repentance or of being sorry. God still doesn't want you to remain trapped with bitterness and wants us to let go of any expectations. But there are those who are going to come back to you, who have wronged you and who are seeking mercy from you. For you to withhold mercy when God has shown you even greater mercy is unacceptable. In fact **Matthew 6:14-15** tells us:

14 "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. 15 But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins."

We should be the most forgiving people on the face of the planet. **We should be people who are not so easily offended, and instead are motivated out of mercy and compassion, being willing to show the same kind of mercy we have received.** While man's way of dealing with relationships is to remain self-focused, be offended, and then work at getting revenge, God's way of dealing with relationships is to love others, being considerate, being moved by their needs and pain, and then being ready to let go and show mercy.

Many of us have remained stuck for a long time – today you have two choices, your way or God's way. One will bind you up, the other will set you free.

I want to close with another verse this morning because I want us to understand that how we treat our relationship can either draw people to God, or turn them away. Look at **Mark 9:50**:

⁵⁰ "Salt is good, but if the salt loses its salty taste, you cannot make it salty again. So, be full of salt, and have peace with each other."

Part of being effective here in this life is how we are able to live at peace with one another, how we deal with our relationships. In a world where it is hard to distinguish the

followers of Christ from those who are still on the outside, the way we treat each other needs to be a clearly seen and be an example for many. It determines the type of Jesus people see us following, and my prayer is that each of us will choose God's way of relationship instead of falling back into old habits and tendencies. Let's pray!

Lord, I thank you for being so full of mercy. You have shown us the way of having relationships with people and the stark contrast of your way versus our way. I pray that you will come and work in our hearts. May bitterness no longer have control of our hearts, but may love and mercy be our strength.

Lord, there may be some of us who have held onto bitterness for a long time and we may have some whom we have refused to show mercy, soften our hearts this morning and make us examples of your great love. Even in those relationships where we will probably never hear an apology, may we let go of any expectations.

Today, make us people of kindness, considerate of others, moved by the needs and hurts of people, willing to show mercy. Let the way we treat others speak of your great mercy, and the life changing presence of your Holy Spirit. Amen!