

Ephesians 4:27

Today's lesson might be one of the most pragmatic discussions we could possibly have! It seems that so much of what troubles me is self-inflicted. Frankly, I can look back on most sins that I commit and see the foolish steps that were taken to lead me to the point of temptation and subsequent failure. Today, let us consider what Paul means when he says we are to give no opportunity to the devil.

1. The absolute

- a. Notice that Paul is declaring the Christian's responsibility here
- b. Far from being a helpless, hopeless target, Scripture shares that we have both ability and responsibility before God as it relates to our adversary
- c. The old line, "the devil made me do it" might seem able to justify our sin but the Bible would retort that it is our calling before God to avoid being underneath his sway!
- d. This means that verse 27 is calling us to look within and without to see why temptation overcomes us
 - i. Sometimes that temptation is totally separate from our actions
 - ii. Many times however the temptation is the product of our opening the door for the snake to slither into our soul

2. The pragmatic

- a. What does it look like to give no opportunity?
- b. First, it looks like activity!
 - i. The old line "idol hands are the devil's workshop" is both pithy and true!
 - ii. It is imperative that we don't sequester ourselves from the work that is ongoing as tranquility and laziness allow our minds and hearts to wander
 - iii. Recall that David was not where he was supposed to be when he spotted Bathsheba and had the unaccounted time to pursue adultery
 - iv. In the same way, when you or I are idle, we are prone to demonic attack
 - v. Could it be that your: anxiety, depression, lust, anger and the like are more likely to pop up when you are sitting around with nothing to do or think about?
- c. Second, it looks like environment
 - i. The simple truth is that some places and some people are more likely to lead us to temptation than others

- ii. A drunk is far more tempted to drink when sitting at a bar than sitting in a pew
 - iii. A hothead is more likely to a fit of rage around other idiots than his born again believers
 - iv. We should be aware of the areas that tempt us and avoid settings and individuals who could be used of Satan to sway us towards our natural, sinful proclivities
- d. Third, it looks like communion
 - i. I have found that the best way to avoid temptation is to be consumed with things that are greater than what I would otherwise be lured to pursue
 - ii. When a child holds a brand new piece of candy in his hands, the potato chip on the ground holds little power over him but when he has nothing to prize over the dirty Dorito, all of the sudden that grimy chip starts to have an appeal!
 - iii. Part of what we are doing when we daily commune with Christ is steeling ourselves against the advances of the enemy for the precise reason that when our souls are fanned into flame with love for God, the advances of the devil have far less persuasive power
 - iv. Thomas Chalmers famously talked about the “expulsive power of a new affection”
 - 1. What he meant was that a more powerful love can kick out any temptation to a lesser love
 - 2. Pragmatically this means that the greatest thing we can do for our walk with Christ is to seek to love Him more and more and this love for God will help us give no opportunity for the devil because we will have no desire for his nonsense