

Ephesians Bible Study
Lesson 15 Notes
Ephesians 4:25-32

These past few months, we have learned that as a new creation in Christ, we think differently, we talk differently, we act differently, we have different motives, and we worship and trust God differently. As we follow God, we should be easily distinguished from the world. There is to be a difference, we are new, we are not like the world and we should stand out. *“The only reliable evidence of a person’s being saved is not a past experience of receiving Christ, but a present life that reflects Christ”*. John MacArthur.

Just a few verses ago, Eph 4:22-24 reminds us that we as believers are laying aside the “old self” and putting on the “new self.” After showing what believers are and have positionally in Christ in chapters 1-3, Paul first gives general basic instruction for the practicality of living the new life in chapter 4:1-24 and then continues throughout the rest of the letter to give specific commands for conduct of that life. As we approach our passage in Ephesians 4:25-32, Paul gives commands reflecting several contrasts between the old life and the new. Based on their newness of life, believers are to change from lying to speaking the truth, from, unrighteous anger to righteous anger, from, stealing to sharing, from, unwholesome words to edifying words and from, natural vices to supernatural virtues. In other words, we cannot continue to say, “this is just who I am”.

Lay aside falsehood and speak truth to one another

The first contrast that Paul mentions is that we are to put away lying and speak truth with our neighbor, for we are members of one another. The word neighbor here is defined by the phrase, members of one another, and means fellow Christians. We are to always speak truth, to everyone, but we have a special motive with other believers because we are fellow heirs, members of the Body of Christ...members of one another. (I Cor. 10:31-33) It is important that we operate in unity within the body of Christ, God values truth, as His beloved, we too should value truth.

As Christians, we have to put lying aside, that means even exaggerating, or telling partial truth, or even withholding information that is pertinent to the good of the whole body. That doesn’t mean that we go around saying everything that is true,

that wouldn't be kind. Dr Iris, the Indian Missionary, tells about her Mother who told her, "All that is spoken should be true, but all that is true doesn't need to be spoken".

Our one mindedness depends on how truthful we are with one another, and how we accept truth. If it were a perfect world, we would be able to go to each other and share our encouragement and our weaknesses with one another. But instead we wrangle about words, and we get sensitive when our feelings get hurt, and we are afraid to speak truth because people get mad and withdraw. But one by one we can change that by following God's mandate here to speak the truth, and then accept the truth when it is spoken to us. Imagine how it would change things when someone came to you, said they had been praying about how to talk to you and then shared their concern, and you listened, and thanked them for coming to you instead of making an excuse for what you said or did or why you said it or did it, or turned it back on them. Now I am not talking about someone coming and accusing you of an untruth, or passing along hearsay, I am talking about the everyday things that people see in our lives, and we see in others lives that may begin to show a need for renewing the mind. I need that kind of encouragement, but because of pride it might not feel good at the moment, but when we ask God to show us the 'truth' that has been spoken, it leads to encouragement rather than anger. It builds unity, because speaking truth is about building up the body of Christ, not tearing it down.

Be angry, and yet do not sin

Anger brings us to the second exchange that Paul challenges us with, and that is our anger is to be without sin, and that we don't delay in dealing with our anger. There are 3 Greek words that are used for anger. Orge, meaning any natural impulse or desire, the reaction of Jesus in the temple in Mark, God's anger with Israel in the wilderness, etc. Thumos, meaning wrath, from a more agitated condition, an outward outburst from an inward indignation, this anger may come on quickly, but may also end with revenge. Porogismos, a stronger form of Orge, is the word used in Ephesians 4:26, this anger tends to seethe, cause fuming and resentment that comes out of jealousy, anger and envy. It tends to seethe under the surface until it surfaces in ugly moodiness and can cause a root of bitterness.

We know that Christ acted in anger for the conviction that the Jews were making a mockery of His Father's house, God's holiness was at stake, (Matt 21:12; John 2:15) and so in righteous anger He turned the money changers out of the temple court. He didn't get angry at the insults that were tossed at Himself, He was angry

about sin, He had every right to be wrathful about it. Jesus was always angered when the Father was maligned or when others were mistreated, but He was never selfishly angry at what was done against Him. That is the measure of righteous anger. Our anger, On the other hand, is usually about when we are offended, or it is about our own causes. Life isn't the way we want it to be, the situation we want isn't working out, we are frustrated, angry, and we lash out. Whether our anger is justified and righteous (and seldom it is) or whether our anger is human anger, deal with it quickly, do not let your anger develop into some kind of personal vendetta or resentment, personal bitterness, sullenness, moodiness wherein you take it out on anyone within hearing or seeing distance. That is sinful anger, no matter how you justify it. Clearly Paul understands how anger can give the Devil an opportunity in the believer's life to use that anger to make him defenseless and useless. The second part of this command is not to let the sun set on your anger, prolonged anger may lead one to begin to seek vengeance and violate God's principle in Romans 12:17-21. (Read)

Not dealing quickly and biblically with our anger, legitimate or not, leads us in allowing Satan a foothold in our minds that leads to self-pity, pride, self-righteousness, vengeance, defense of our rights and every other thing that keeps us from living in the peace of our relationship with God.

From stealing to sharing

The third command that Paul sets forth requires a change from stealing to sharing. We are all tempted at one time or another to take something that does not belong to us. Whether it be small or large, an orange or a car, the Christian is to steal no longer. Paul tells us the alternative to stealing is to labor(work), performing with his own hands, a personal responsibility for one's own provision, and even more, to share with those who have need. The work we do should do no harm to anyone and should bring glory to God in how we do it. Paul understood this well. (Acts 20:33-35) (Read)

From unwholesome words to wholesome words

The fourth command that Paul speaks of is the use of our words. Our speech should be transformed with us. It has been argued that in some lives, people have used such offensive speech for so long that they don't even know that they are saying those things. I would challenge you that when God makes known to someone that their speech is offensive, they can choose not to use unwholesome words. As a believer we have everything we need for life and godliness. 2 Pet 1:3.

We have the power of the Holy Spirit alive in us, that helps overcome any evil. Paul takes a step further, not only does he show we are commanded to put off unwholesome speech, but we are to put on wholesome speech. In verse 29, Paul gives us 3 characteristics of wholesome speaking: it is edifying, appropriate and gracious.

Edifying: Our speech should build up by being helpful, constructive, encouraging, instructive and uplifting. At times it might be corrective, but that too can be edifying if done in the right spirit. Proverbs 25:12. The times we are tempted not to communicate this way is when we have not dealt with issues of anger in a biblical way, when we have allowed anger to seethe below the surface and we have not taken it to the Lord.

Appropriate: According to the need of the moment. What we say should always be fitting for the situation we are in at the moment, not something that has happened in the past, but is happening right now. Again, dealing with anger about a past situation or even just having not dealt with a past situation will build up and will be brought up at inappropriate times. We need to keep our words to the current need, and if necessary, to reprove or correct, it is done with gentleness. A believer never purposefully mentions things that might harm, discourage or disappoint someone else. Those things might be perfectly true, but do they pass the test of edifying and appropriate, and the last, will they give grace to those who hear?

Graciousness: Do they give grace to those listening. Isaiah 50:4 is such a beautiful example of the speech of Christ. Isa 50:4

*The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples,
That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word.*

Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned as it were with salt. Col 4:6

In Eph 4:15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ.

This reminds us that speaking the truth in love is a part of our growth in Christ, we must put off continuing to tell ourselves and others that this is just who I am and continue to speak harshly to one another. Raw truth is seldom appropriate and is often destructive. We have been saved by grace, and we are kept in grace, therefore we are to live and speak in grace. Just as grace supremely characterizes God, it should also characterize His children.

Grieving the Holy Spirit

A powerful motivation for putting off unwholesome talk, is that not doing so, will grieve the Holy Spirit. Often, we don't give much thought to the Holy Spirit, not understanding His personhood. Specifically, in light of this text in Ephesians, the personhood of the Holy Spirit is seen in the fact that He can be treated as a person. He can be tested (Acts 5:9), lied to (Acts 5:3), resisted (Acts 7:51), insulted (Heb. 10:29) and blasphemed (Matt 12:31-32). Whatever violates the will of God and the holiness of the heart will grieve the third person of the Trinity. Grieving can lead to quenching (1 Thess. 5:19) and to a forfeiture of power and blessing.

Paul asks, in effect, "How can we do that which is so displeasing to the One by whom (we) have been sealed for the day of redemption?" Eph 1:13-14. How can we grieve the One who is our Helper, Comforter, Teacher, Advocate, Divine Resident of our hearts, and guarantor of our eternal redemption? Our sin really can bring grief to God and, according to the context of this passage, this is especially true for the sins of the mouth that cause disunity between believers.

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice.

The final charge Paul makes is from natural vices to the supernatural virtues as he ties these verses together.

Man's natural tendency is to sin, and the natural tendency of sin is to grow into greater sin. Even in a believer sin will grow if left unchecked. Inner sins of bitterness and wrath and anger will inevitably lead to outward sins of clamor and slander and even such things a malice(intent or desire to do evil). Again, imagine what this will do to the unity of the body of Christ if we let these sins go unchecked in our attitudes and in our behavior.

Inner Sins:

Bitterness: a smoldering resentment, brooding grudge filled attitude

Wrath: Has to do with wild rage, the passion of the moment

Anger: A more internal smoldering, subtle deep feeling

Outer Sins:

Clamor: A shout or outcry of strife, outbursts that reveal loss of control

Slander: The on going defamation of someone that rises from a bitter heart

Malice: The root of all vices, a general term for evil

They must ALL be put away from you. These are the sins that break fellowship and destroy relationships that weaken the church and mar our testimony before the world.

Instead, Paul challenges us, you are rather (instead of the above)to be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven us.

Virtues

Kind: Good, pleasant, gracious

Tenderhearted: Compassionate, a gnawing almost pain due to empathy to someone's need.

Forgiving each other: Understanding the unpayable debt we owed and were forgiven and passing that forgiveness on to others in living out our faith.

Closing Prayer

Col 3:12-17

12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

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