

LESSON TWO

**A LIVING THAT DOES NOT GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD
&
A SUMMARY OF LEARNING CHRIST**

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 4:20 But you did not so learn Christ,

Eph. 4:21 If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him as the reality is in Jesus,

Eph. 4:22 That you put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the lusts of the deceit,

Eph. 4:23 And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind

Eph. 4:24 And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.

Eph. 4:25 Therefore having put off the lie, speak truth each one with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Eph. 4:26 Be angry, yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your indignation,

Eph. 4:27 Neither give place to the devil.

Eph. 4:28 He who steals should steal no more, but rather should labor, working with his own hands in that which is respectable, that he may have something to share with him who has need.

Eph. 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, according to the need, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Eph. 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of the redemption.

Eph. 4:31 Let all bitterness and anger and wrath and clamor and evil speaking be removed from you, with all malice.

Eph. 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ also forgave you.

Questions:

Section 1

1. What are the basic elements of Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 4:17-32?
2. What principle should govern every aspect of our living? Please share some examples.
3. How do we overcome the negative elements mentioned in verse 31?

Section 2

1. How could we be angry yet not sin? How do we deal with our anger?
2. What should our conversation be like in our daily living and how can we do it?
3. What does it mean to grieve the Holy Spirit? Please share some examples.

Section 3

1. What is the definition of grace?
2. What is the definition of truth?

Section 4

1. In your own experience, how can you see the working of grace and truth?
2. Why do we need grace in our daily life and why can't truth by itself meet our needs?

[Section 1]

I. A LIVING OF LEARNING CHRIST

In verses 25 through 32 we have a description of the practical daily living in the learning of Christ. In covering the daily life of learning Christ, Paul goes into a lot of detail. He mentions things such as anger, stealing, bitterness, wrath, clamor, evil speaking, malice, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. Although these details are easy to see, it is more difficult to discern two important matters that Paul's speaking is based upon. These matters are reality and grace. The apostle's exhortation in verses 17 through 32 takes reality and grace as its basic elements (vv. 21 , 24 , 25 , 29). He wants us to live as Jesus did, a life full of grace and reality (John 1:14 , 17). Grace is God given to us for our enjoyment, and reality is God revealed to us as our reality. When we live and speak truth (Eph. 4:21 , 24), we express God as our reality, and others receive God as grace for their enjoyment (v. 29).

In the New Testament grace and reality are a pair. John 1:14 says that the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace and reality,

and verse 17 says that grace and reality came through Jesus Christ.

Just as grace and reality are a pair, so love and light are also a pair. In the Gospel of John we have grace and reality, but in the first Epistle of John we have love and light (4:16 ; 1:5). Grace is the expression of love, and love is the source of grace. In the same principle, truth (reality) is the expression of light, and light is the source of truth. In God's heart there is love. When this love is expressed, it becomes grace. Likewise, with God there is light. When the light shines forth, it becomes truth. When we trace grace and truth back to their source in God, we are in love and light.

We have pointed out that Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 4:17-32 covers both reality and grace. Reality is clearly mentioned, but grace is somewhat hidden, being especially implied in Paul's mention of the details related to daily living. If we are short of grace, we cannot meet the standard in relation to these details. The principles for our learning of Christ are related to the reality, whereas the details are related to grace. If we would be conformed to the image of Christ, that is, if we would learn Christ, we need both the principles and the details. If we have the reality, we have the principles. If we have grace, we will succeed in meeting the standard in all the details.

Paul says that we learn Christ as the reality is in Jesus (v. 21). The pattern, the mold, set up by the Lord Jesus is the reality. The reality is the principle, the principle is the pattern, and the pattern is a matter of having put off the old man and of having put on the new man. In verses 17 through 24 we have the principle of our renewed daily living for the learning of Christ. This principle is the reality, the living of the Lord Jesus when He was on earth. The Lord's living was that of always putting off His own life and of putting on the Father's life. This is the life of Jesus, and this life is the reality that is the principle of a life of learning Christ. According to this principle, we have put off the old man and have put on the new man.

Every aspect of our daily living should be governed by this principle, not by a standard of ethics. For example, our conversation should be governed not by a standard of ethics but by the New Testament principle of having put off the old man and of having put on the new man. Even how much we laugh or cry should be determined by the principle of having put off the old man and of having put on the new man. This principle is much higher than any ethical standard.

In baptism we put off the old man and put on the new man, which is the church life. Now our daily living in the church life is to be according to the principle of reality, according to the pattern of the life of reality set up by the living of the Lord Jesus. We have been taught according to this principle as the reality is in Jesus.

The details of our daily living are related to grace. In every aspect of our daily living, we need grace. Grace is God Himself in Christ as our enjoyment. We need to allow this enjoyment to remove from us the negative elements mentioned in verse 31. One of these negative elements is bitterness. Without grace we cannot let go of our bitterness. But when we have God in Christ as our enjoyment, our bitterness will disappear. When we have sufficient grace, we can say, "I am filled with Christ as my enjoyment. Because I am filled to the brim with grace, there is no room in me for bitterness of any kind."

Only when we are filled with grace will the negative things be removed from us. Take gossip as an example. We enjoy gossiping because we are short of grace. If we are filled with grace, we will not seek satisfaction in gossiping. On the contrary, we will be content with the satisfaction that is in Christ. When we are filled with grace and when Christ is everything to us, we have no need to find satisfaction in other things.

Only by grace can we have a life that is according to the divine standard in all the details mentioned by Paul in these verses. If we are filled with grace, then in the place of bitterness, wrath, anger, and clamor, we will have kindness, patience, mercy, forgiveness, and love. These qualities come not from self-effort but from Christ as our enjoyment. When Christ is our enjoyment, we have no appetite for bitterness, wrath, anger, or clamor. Instead, we desire to have kindness, patience, endurance, gentleness, mercy, love, and various other virtues and qualities. What a difference it makes in our daily living when we are happy and satisfied through the enjoyment of God in Christ as grace!

II. HAVING PUT OFF THE LIE

Let us now consider the details of a living of learning Christ. In verse 25 Paul says, "Therefore having put off the lie, speak truth each one with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." The lie here refers to anything that is false in nature. Because we put off the old man, we also put off everything that is false in nature. If we have the enjoyment of Christ, then in a practical way in our daily living, we will put off every false thing. The most honest and faithful

people are those who have the full enjoyment of Christ. When we are filled to the brim with Christ, all lies will be put away from us.

III. SPEAKING TRUTH EACH ONE WITH HIS NEIGHBOR

Having put off the lie, we should speak truth each one with his neighbor. When we are filled with Christ, our speaking will be of things that are true. In our speaking, there will be no lies and no vanity.

[Section 2]

IV. BEING ANGRY YET NOT SINNING

Verses 26 and 27 say, “Be angry, yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your indignation, neither give place to the devil.” Anger itself is not sin, but it is dangerously close to sin. We should not continue in anger but rather relinquish our anger before the sun sets.

According to the four Gospels, the Lord Jesus sometimes was angry. But His anger was always under control. Hence, He could be angry and not sin. It must be the same with us in our daily living. Our anger must be under control. Otherwise, serious damage will result. In order to control our anger, we need much grace. The more we enjoy Christ, the more our anger will be limited and controlled.

A. Not Letting the Sun Go Down on Our Indignation

In verse 26 Paul tells us not to let the sun go down on our indignation. We should be slow to become angry, but we should be quick to relinquish our anger. According to this verse, we should not keep it past the setting of the sun. We should not let our anger carry over into the next day. According to the Scriptures, we must relinquish our anger before the sun goes down. We all need to practice this. For such a practice we need God in Christ as grace. If we have the supply of grace, we will be slow to anger, and we will not remain angry very long when we do become angry. If we have grace, our anger will not linger.

B. Neither Giving Place to the Devil

Verse 27 says, “Neither give place to the devil.” According to the context, to continue in anger is to give place to the devil. In nothing should we give any place to him. If we hold on to our anger, we are actually welcoming the devil. But if we relinquish our anger, we close the door to the devil and give him no place.

V. HE WHO STEALS NEEDING TO STEAL NO MORE

Verse 28 continues, “He who steals should steal no more, but rather should labor, working with his own hands in that which is respectable, that he may have something to share with him who has need.” In a book of such high revelation, the apostle still touches things on a practical level, even such low things as anger and stealing. Stealing is due mainly to slothfulness and greed. Hence, the apostle charges him who steals to labor instead of being slothful and to share with others what he gains instead of being greedy.

VI. LETTING NO CORRUPT WORD PROCEED OUT OF THE MOUTH

Verse 29 says, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, according to the need, that it may give grace to those who hear.” The Greek word for corrupt signifies something that is noxious, offensive, or worthless. Our conversation should not corrupt others but should build them up. The church and every member of the church need the proper building up. This building up is accomplished primarily by our speaking. What proceeds out of our mouth should be that which is good for the building up of the church and all the saints.

Furthermore, the word out of our mouth should give grace to those who hear. Grace is God embodied in Christ as our enjoyment and supply. Our word should convey this as grace to others. The word that builds up others always ministers grace to the hearers. Our word should communicate God in Christ as enjoyment, imparting Christ to others as their life supply.

VII. NOT GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD

In verse 30 Paul says, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption.” The word and at the beginning of this verse indicates that in addition to all the things mentioned in verses 25 through 29, one crucial thing is needed, that is, that we should not grieve the Holy Spirit. To grieve the Holy Spirit is to displease Him. The Holy Spirit abides in us forever (John 14:16-17); He never leaves us. Hence, He is grieved when we do not walk according to Him (Rom. 8:4). If we have a life according to the principle of reality with grace for the details of our daily walk, we will not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. However, if we do not live this way, the Spirit within us will be grieved.

For the Holy Spirit to be grieved means that He is not happy with us. Often when we feel unhappy, that feeling of unhappiness is actually the feeling of the Holy Spirit. However, when He feels happy within us, we are happy also. A proper life according to reality and in grace will always make the Holy Spirit happy and give us the joy of the Spirit.

In the apostle's exhortation in Ephesians 4:17-32, there are not only grace and reality as the basic elements, but there are also the life of God (v. 18) and the Spirit of God as the basic factors on the positive side and the devil (v. 27) on the negative side. It is by the life of God in the Spirit of God, and by not giving place to the devil, that we can live a life full of grace and reality as the Lord Jesus did.

VIII. LETTING VARIOUS EVILS BE REMOVED FROM US

In verse 31 Paul says, "Let all bitterness and anger and wrath and clamor and evil speaking be removed from you, with all malice." All the evil things mentioned in this verse can be removed from us if we enjoy God in Christ as our grace. For example, there will be no clamor in our daily living, and there will be no evil speaking. No one who lives by the principle of reality and in grace will speak evil of others.

IX. BEING KIND ONE TO ANOTHER

Finally, verse 32 says, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ also forgave you." Here the Greek word for tenderhearted has the same origin as moved with compassion in Matthew 9:36 and inward parts in Philippians 1:8. Only the enjoyment of Christ as our life supply and as our joy can make our hearts tender. If we are tenderhearted, we will forgive others. In our daily walk we need both to forgive others and to ask others to forgive us. This is necessary because we are easily offended and we easily offend others. If we have offended someone, we need to ask for forgiveness. But if we have been offended, we need to extend forgiveness to others, even as God in Christ has forgiven us.

In his exhortation in this section, the apostle presents God as the pattern of our daily living. By the life of God, in His Spirit, we can forgive as God forgives. If this is our daily living, we will not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. To have such a living, we need to live according to reality and by God in Christ as our grace.

[Section 3]

[The condition of learning Christ and the living of learning Christ] is a matter of having put off the old man and of having put on the new man. The living of learning Christ is a matter of applying the principle of truth and of living according to grace. In this message we shall present a summary of learning Christ. This summary includes truth (4:21, 24, 25) and grace (v. 29) as the basic elements and the life of God (v. 18), the Spirit of God (v. 30), and the Devil (v. 27) as the basic factors.

X. BASIC ELEMENTS

...In the New Testament grace and truth are a pair and that love and light are another pair. These pairs are revealed mainly in the writings of John. His Gospel speaks of grace and truth, and his First Epistle speaks of love and light. The Gospel of John tells how God came to us in the Son so that we may receive Him as grace and realize Him as truth. Then 1 John reveals that after we have received God in the Son, we may come to God the Father to enjoy Him as love and light. Thus in the Gospel of John God comes to us as grace and truth, but in the First Epistle of John we go to God to enter into His love and light in fellowship. This indicates that there is traffic between God and us and between us and God. According to the book of Revelation, the issue, the result, of this divine traffic is the golden lampstands in this age and the New Jerusalem in eternity.

John 1:17 says that the law was given through Moses and that grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. This means that before the coming of Christ grace and truth had not come to God's people. Yes, there were shadows of grace and truth in the Old Testament age, but there was not the reality of grace and truth until Jesus Christ appeared. When Christ came, grace and truth came also.

The Gospel of John reveals how God came to man through incarnation. The Word which was with God and which was God became flesh and tabernacled among us (John 1:1, 14). Verse 14 says that this incarnated One was full of grace and truth. It does not say that He was full of power and authority, majesty and sovereignty, or love and light. Many Christians quote John 1:14 without knowing the meaning of grace and truth. Grace and truth are intimately related to God Himself. Grace is something sweet, and truth is something real. Grace is actually the sweet Person of the Lord Jesus, who is the embodiment of the fullness of God and the effulgence of the divine glory (Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3). This means that He is the expression of God.

The Gospel of John speaks a great deal about life. John 10:10 says that the Lord came that we may have life and may have it abundantly. The sweet and lovely Person of Jesus is the shining forth of God Himself, His very expression. As such a One, He is life to us. Life is the essence, whereas grace is the enjoyment that comes by tasting life. When we taste the sweetness of life, we experience grace as our enjoyment. Thus, life is the substance, and grace is the enjoyment.

This is confirmed in the writings of Paul. Paul suffered from “a thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7). This thorn may have been a physical ailment or defect. Paul prayed to the Lord three times that this thorn might depart from him (2 Cor. 12:8). The Lord answered him by saying, “My grace is sufficient for thee: my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9, Gk.). The Lord allowed the thorn to remain so that Paul could have an opportunity to enjoy His grace. In Paul’s weakness God’s power, His sufficient grace, was made perfect.

Grace is the enjoyment of the Triune God in all that He is to us. When He is life to us, that is grace. When He is power to us, that also is grace. Grace is whatever Christ is to us subjectively as our enjoyment. We need grace daily, even hourly. We need the enjoyment of Christ as our life, our power, and everything to us. Grace is the Triune God becoming our enjoyment. He has come to us so that we may gain Him, experience Him, and enjoy Him. When we experience Him as our enjoyment, He becomes grace to us.

We come now to the matter of truth. Because our mind may be preoccupied with natural concepts of truth, we may find it difficult to understand the meaning of truth according to the New Testament. Many regard truth merely as doctrine. Whenever they see the word truth in the Bible, they automatically interpret it as doctrine. However, in the New Testament, truth does not denote doctrine. If you want proof of this, try substituting doctrine for truth in various verses where truth is mentioned. John 1:14 would then say that the Word became flesh, full of grace and doctrine; John 1:17, that grace and doctrine came through Jesus Christ; and John 14:6, that the Lord is the way, the doctrine, and the life. How ridiculous! It is absurd to say that we have learned Christ as the doctrine is in Jesus. Nevertheless, in the concept of many believers, truth means nothing more than doctrine. Others regard truth as sincerity. According to this understanding, to speak in truth is to speak in sincerity.

If we would know the meaning of truth in the New Testament, we need to lay aside these

definitions. Truth is God revealed. How much different this is from saying that truth is doctrine or sincerity! In principle, because grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ, they must be something of God Himself. Jesus is God coming to us. When God comes to us, He does not come as doctrine or sincerity. When He comes, everything related to His being also comes. God comes to us for our enjoyment. This is grace. God also comes to reveal Himself to us. This is truth. In other words, when God is enjoyed by us, He is grace. But when God is revealed to us, He is truth. Truth, therefore, is God revealed to us.

These definitions of grace and truth can be applied to almost every case recorded in the four Gospels, especially to those cases found in the Gospel of John. Let us consider two such cases, one in John 4 and the other in John 8. In both chapters truth is mentioned (4:23-24; 8:32). As the Lord Jesus was going from Judea into Galilee, “He had to pass through Samaria” (John 4:4) in order to meet a certain immoral Samaritan woman, who came to the well to draw water. Wearied from His journey, the Lord sat down by the well and waited for this Samaritan woman to appear. When the Lord Jesus asked her for a drink, she was surprised that a Jew would ask a drink from a Samaritan woman. The Lord replied, “If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water” (v. 10). After she questioned Him further, the Lord answered, “Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a spring of water welling up into eternal life” (vv. 13-14). What grace He showed toward her! After the Samaritan woman tasted the grace of God, she came to realize something of who the Lord Jesus was. Thus God was not only enjoyed by her, but also revealed to her. When the Lord Jesus contacted the Samaritan woman, He was the embodiment of grace and truth.

In John 8 the Lord contacted another sinful woman, a woman caught in adultery. Through His contact with her, God became her enjoyment and was also revealed to her. The Lord helped her to receive Him as grace and to know Him as God revealed.

[Section 4]

According to the Gospels, all who contacted the Lord Jesus in a positive way received grace and saw truth. The grace they received was God Himself, and the truth they beheld was also God. Therefore, John tells us that of His fullness we

have all received grace upon grace (1:16). We have received from Him the riches of what God is. This is God received, experienced, and enjoyed. This is grace. Following this, God is seen and realized by us. This is truth.

When I was young, I was bothered by the fact that John puts grace before truth. I thought that the revelation of God should precede the enjoyment of God. One day I saw that the Lord Jesus firstly comes to us as grace and then as truth. As I looked back on my experience, I realized that I enjoyed Christ as grace long before I knew Him as truth. Many of us enjoyed Christ as grace before we knew Him as truth. This means that we enjoyed Him without realizing what He is. This indicates that enjoyment comes before realization, that grace comes before truth.

We have pointed out that in the Gospel of John God comes to us, but that in the First Epistle of John we go to God. As we go to God, we enter into the inner chamber to contact the Father through the Son under the cleansing of the blood of Jesus. Here in this inner chamber we experience not grace and truth, but love and light. For this reason, in 1 John we have love instead of grace and light instead of truth. When God comes to us, we receive Him as grace and truth. But when we go to God, we meet Him as love and light. This is deeper and more inward than the experience of grace and truth.

When we have fellowship with the Father in the inner chamber and enjoy Him as love and light, we then have grace and truth for our practical daily living in the world. In our fellowship with the Father we have love and light, but at home or in our place of employment we have grace and truth. Through grace and truth we have the kind of daily living Paul exhorts us to have in Ephesians 4. Although we may be under pressure at work or at home, we can still live according to truth and by the supply of grace. If others are not pleasant toward us, we have the grace to bear it. Then others will see that God is with us. In this way our daily living will be of grace and truth.

The church life is the issue of God coming to us as grace and truth and of our going to God to meet Him as love and light. Out of this traffic come the seven lampstands in the book of Revelation. Ultimately, the issue of this heavenly traffic will be the New Jerusalem as God's eternal testimony. Both the lampstands and the New Jerusalem come out from the traffic between God and us and between us and God. In this traffic God comes to us to be our grace and truth, and we go to God to experience Him as our love and light.

A. Truth

We may apply this now to the book of Ephesians. We have seen that the basic elements in the learning of Christ are truth and grace. In contrast to the Gospel of John, in Ephesians 4 truth precedes grace. Truth is not the supply; it is the shining of light. Hence, truth is the principle, the pattern, the standard. As members of the Body of Christ under the Head, we are learning Christ as the truth is in Jesus.

Before he mentions grace here, Paul presents the principle, the pattern, the standard; that is, he presents the truth. We all have been baptized not into grace, but into the mold, into the pattern, which is the life of truth in Jesus. We have been placed by God through baptism into the pattern, the standard, the principle, set up by the living of the Lord Jesus on earth. This is the truth in Ephesians 4.

B. Grace

In order to live out such a standard, we must have grace. In verse 29 Paul relates grace to our speaking. This indicates that we need grace for the details of our daily life, not just for what we regard as important matters. We may have grace in big matters, but not in small matters. For example, a brother may have grace to minister the Word, but he may lack grace in speaking to his wife. Furthermore, in the prayer meeting we may all have grace, but in our daily conversation we may be devoid of grace. In no area of our daily life do we require grace more than in our conversation. If we have grace in this aspect of our living, we shall have grace in every other aspect.

In all things we need grace to live a life according to the truth that is in Jesus and to be molded into the image of Christ. Grace is our rich supply and enjoyment. If we have this supply and enjoyment, we shall be able to live according to the standard of the principle of truth. For this reason Paul takes truth and grace as the basic elements in his exhortation in chapter four.

XI. BASIC FACTORS

A. On the Positive Side

Along with these basic elements, there are also some basic factors. On the positive side, these factors are the life of God (v. 18) and the Spirit of God (v. 30).

1. The Life of God

In contrast to the Gentiles, we are not strangers to the life of God. Instead of being alienated from the life of God, we are attached to the source of life. The life of God has become a fountain within our very being. Hallelujah for the life supply within us!

2. The Spirit of God

We also have the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is the Person of God. God Himself in the Person of the Spirit dwells within us. We must be careful, therefore, not to grieve Him. Rather, we should obey Him, honor Him, respect Him, and be one with Him at all times.

B. On the Negative Side

The basic factor on the negative side is the Devil. In verse 27 Paul exhorts us not to give place to the Devil. Although we have the life of God and the Spirit of God within us, the enemy is still lurking about us; he is always seeking an opportunity to gain an advantage over us or to damage us. We need to be on the alert for this crouching enemy.

References:

Life-Study of Ephesians msg. 48 & 49