
Ephesians 4:25-32 (W. Doud notes)

Ephesians 4:25

Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

This section of Ephesians, from 4:25 to 5:2, directs us to the very practical results of our putting on the "new man" of verse 24. The word "wherefore" indicates that the following characteristics of the Christian life are a direct result of the development of a new Christian character.

This is where the rubber meets the road. The Christian life demands a new character, a new outlook, and a willingness both to "abide in Christ" and to "grow in Christ." Here are the positive qualities or actions that must be found in the Christian life.

We are to "put away lying" and "speak truth".

Zech. 8:16 'These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates.'

Falsehood is put away with the old man. Truth, and truthfulness, comes in with edification.

"we are members one of another"

When Christians try to deceive one another, they break the bonds of royal family, love, and fellowship. We belong together as members of one body, so we must be completely honest and open with one another.

Chrysostom: "If the eye sees a serpent, does it deceive the foot? If the tongue tastes what is bitter, does it deceive the stomach?"

Foulkes: "Lying is a great hindrance to the proper functioning of the body. When members are open and truthful, the body will work in harmony and therefore efficiently. Without openness and truth, there can only be disunity, disorder, and trouble."

In general, growth in Christ is the antidote for verbal sins.

Topic: SINS OF THE TONGUE

Ephesians 4:26

Be angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

OR, "Although you may have become angry, stop sinning."

This verse is a quotation of Psalm 4:4.

There is righteous anger, such as we see in the Lord Himself (Mark 3:5; John 2:13-17); but His anger never led to sin because His emotions were always perfectly controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Foulkes: "A Christian must be sure that any anger is that of righteous indignation and not just an expression of personal provocation or wounded pride. It must have no sinful motives nor be allowed to lead to sin in any way."

Christians can have victory over the sin of anger! The Bible talks about anger and answers questions like the following:

What's the difference between sinful anger and righteous indignation?

Does God get angry?

What causes me to get angry, and what can I do about it?

How can I have victory over the sin of anger?

If you haven't recently studied what the Bible says about ANGER, it's important that you do so now. The topic accompanies this lesson.

Topic: ANGER

"let not the sun go down upon your wrath"

"Wrath" is PARORGISMOS, "provocation", which refers to the personal resentment that anger, even righteous anger, can become when it is harbored and brooded over in men's hearts, especially when the heart is overwhelmed with temptations to malice and bitterness. Passionate feelings against people are not to be kept long lest they break down the love between brethren.

The teaching of verses 31 and 32 is also very important here. Those verses show that the means for putting away bitterness and malice is "forgiveness". The grace believer is a forgiving person. Realizing that the Lord has forgiven us, even when we were His enemies, we are motivated to put away our self-righteousness, or even our genuine rights, in order to forgive others and "put away wrath".

Even unbelievers are not strangers to this concept of achieving immediate reconciliation with others in times of strife. Plutarch says of the Pythagoreans: ".. if betrayed into angry reviling (they) made it their rule to shake hands before sunset."

Psalm 4:4, "Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah."

Ephesians 4:27

Neither give place to the devil.

"Place" = "opportunity". Bishop Moule says that anger "gives Satan a half open door", an opportunity for fostering the spirit of pride or hatred.

Foulkes: "Sudden instinctive indignation against injustice or wrong, good in itself, if retained and nursed as a grievance, will let the devil lead his victim on to unkind thoughts, words and actions, and so work havoc with personal relationships."

Satan is to be resisted. James 4:7. He is to be given no place in the believer's life.

Ephesians 4:28

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that has need.

There must be no more common pilfering, but honest work instead.

Dishonesty was a way of life for many in ancient times, just as it is for many people today. Whenever discipline or personal integrity is even slightly relaxed, honesty and productivity slip a lot. Most employees are in a position to steal something: pencils, computer time, petty cash, working time.

The honest Christian laborer stands out in a society like this. Honesty and good character are two of the most important aspects of the Christian's testimony. In any witnessing situation, these traits are necessary before any verbal testimony can be successful. Lev 19:35,36; Deut 25:13-16

Prov 11:1 "A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight."

See also Prov. 16:11; 20:10; Micah 6:9-14.

Rom 12:17 "Recompense no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

READ 2 Cor 8:20-24

1 Thess 4:11,12 "That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing."

Note carefully Titus 2:9,10

Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, NOT PILFERING, but showing all good faith that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

The objective of this Christian life is to ADORN, to DECORATE the doctrine of the Savior! What a precious privilege and responsibility!

To ADORN means "to arrange; to set in order; to decorate; to embellish; to prepare; to trim; to put in readiness; to honor; to dignify"

Matt. 23:29 "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish (kosmew) the sepulchres of the righteous..."

Luke 21:5 "And as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned (kosmew) with goodly stones and gifts,"

1 Tim 2:9 "...women adorn (kosmew) themselves in modest apparel..." The adorning of the heart is to be given priority.

Rev. 21:2,19 "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished (kosmew) with all manner of precious stones."

One of the main goals of God's plan is that every Christian "adorn" or "decorate" the doctrine of the Lord. Honesty in everyday life is a very important part of this.

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.

Note just ahead in Ephesians 5:3,4, "But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and {there must be no} filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks."

The word "corrupt" is SOPROS, "rotten", therefore "worthless". Like bad fruit, such speech spreads rottenness and leads others to think on the worthless. This is to be replaced with "that which is good".

Proverbs 15:23, A man has joy in an apt answer, And how delightful is a timely word!

Foulkes: "The test of a man's use of money is: 'What am I giving to those in need?' The test of his conversation is not just 'Am I keeping my words true and pure?' but 'Are my words being used to minister grace unto the hearers?'"

The speech of the Christian is to be characterized by grace.

Col. 3:16,17, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with. 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."

Col. 4:5,6, "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person."

Ephesians 4:30

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.

All sin is a cause of personal sorrow to God. We are called to "walk worthy of the vocation with which you are called", to walk in fellowship with the Lord. And the Holy Spirit occupies the Christian and is the source, the bond, of the spiritual fellowship with have with God. He is our teacher and our comforter. Sin grieves the Holy Spirit and is the cause for the loss of fellowship, the loss of filling, the loss of the controlling ministry of the Spirit.

The Spirit's presence is also a seal of assurance of the life and inheritance that we possess now and will possess fully in the end. The very thought of this should encourage us to keep ourselves pure.

1 John 3:2-6, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

"And everyone who has this hope {fixed} on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

"Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

"And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

"No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him."

But we do sin! And we do grieve the Spirit! So remember that Jesus Christ is our Advocate with the Father. And remember that there is open to us a method of being cleansed from the corruption and defilement of the sin we commit - by means of the cleansing which follows confession.

1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Prov. 1:23, "Turn at my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you."

So there is a restoration to fellowship with the Spirit, a means of continuing to be occupied with Christ, through acknowledging God's sovereignty and our sin.

Ephesians 4:31

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

Here is even more reference to sins of the tongue and of mental attitude, so that they can be set over against the way that we have learned in Christ. Six things are named here that are decisively to be put away.

"Bitterness" is PIKRIA (cf. the English "picric acid"). Aristotle spoke of this as "the resentful spirit which refuses reconciliation." The Apostle Paul says that all of this must go, every trace of such sharpness of spirit, of such temper.

The "wrath" and "anger" here are those which spring up from passion and temper because of personal resentment or provocation. The only Christian rule about these is total abstinence!

Then follows "clamor", KRAUGEI, which is "the loud self-assertion of the angry man, who will make everyone else hear his grievance."

"Evil speaking" is BLASPHEMIA, "slander; blasphemy". This word is commonly used for speaking against God, but it is also often used for slanderous or abusive speaking against one's fellow men.

Finally, Paul adds "all malice", or "bad feeling of every kind", thus demanding the complete exclusion from the Christian's life of every thought that leads a person to speak or do evil against some else (Foulkes).

Ephesians 4:32

And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

The parallel passage in Col. 3:12 says, "Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering."

If, after all, God has forgiven us of the most heinous sins, having reconciled us even while we were His enemies (Romans 5), how much more ought we to have gracious regards for other people, and act as conduits of God's grace to them.

A forgiving spirit is one of the most obvious and telling character traits in a growing Christian. The lack of a forgiving spirit is the mark of the novice Christian.

The word "forgive" is a Grace word, in the English as well as in the Greek. An early meaning in English was "to give or to grant". Then, "forgive" came to mean "to remit a debt; to give up resentment or claim for requital; to pardon an offense."

All of us are debtors to others, to society as a whole. And we often feel that people owe us many things in our human relationships. We feel we are owed courtesy and consideration. Sometimes we think that we are owed reward or status or promotion in some enterprise, or on the job. We are certainly owed fair treatment, justice, restitution and many other things.

But, many people in America are spiritually, ethically, and morally bankrupt. They simply cannot pay society what they owe! They are thoughtless, selfish, ungracious. What should a Christian do about all of the debts owed to him. Answer: forgive them, as Christ forgave you.

A Christian who practices Grace thinking (divine viewpoint) will become a forgiving person. To forgive means "to give up a claim; to cease bearing resentment".

The rich man in Luke 7 was able to forgive the two debtors because he was prosperous. He gave to them out of his prosperity. A person can only give to others out of what God has already provided in the way of prosperity. In terms of money, the principle is "Let him that stole, steal no more; rather, let him labor, doing with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

As a growing Christian, you have many other kinds of prosperity, by the Grace of God. You have intellectual prosperity (divine viewpoint). You have spiritual prosperity (peace with God). You have emotional prosperity (relaxed mental attitude). You have financial prosperity (mastery of details of life). You have social prosperity (stable marriage, stable family life, etc.).

Wherever in your life you find that someone else owes you something, you have the wherewithal to forgive him! God has forgiven all of us who are absolutely without resources of our own. And He is not expecting or demanding some kind of payment in return for His Grace gifts. And we are to be channels of Grace to the world. "Out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water."
