

Ephesians 4
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Paul’s letters begin with a doctrinal statement and then move onto applications or practical advice. Chapters 1-3 have spoken of predestination and election, adoption and redemption, the work of the Holy Spirit, rebirth, the work of God in joining people from all nations and all walks of life together in the one holy body of Christ, the church. That section then ends with a doxology. Now Paul moves on to applications of the theology.

Eph 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,
Eph 4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love,
Eph 4:3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

How often do we think about walking every second of each day in a behavior worthy of the calling of God? What does this mean anyway? “To walk,” means to conduct ourselves in every situation in which we find ourselves every second of every day. This behavior has to start in our mind. So what does it mean that we are “to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called”? God called me out of the world to be His child forever. He placed all of my sins on the cross of Jesus Christ and He put all of the righteousness of Jesus Christ on me, so I am not only sinless before God the Father, I possess the righteousness of Jesus Christ before God the Father. But that is not the end of the story. God wants us to walk here reflecting that sinlessness and righteousness. As we saw in Ephesians chapter 2, we were dead and God raised us from the dead and gave us spiritual sight. Now we can see the truth and we know that it is desirable, whereas before we could not even see it, much less appreciate its desirability. We also read

Eph 2:10 “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

We know then that God has prepared a path for us to walk in and we want to walk in that path. Paul tells us how we are to walk in that path.

1. With Humility.

Certainly, realizing that our sinlessness and righteousness are totally independent of anything that we have done and totally dependent upon the work of Jesus Christ should make us extremely humble. There is absolutely no room for any arrogance in the attitude of someone who has been called by God to be His child. It is difficult to walk in this world with humility because our pride is so easily wounded and then insists on recompense. We have to put our neighbor’s needs above our own needs. Our humility has to constantly reflect the fact that our needs are met by our loving Father and not based upon any goodness of our own.

2. With Gentleness

Gentleness also means kindness, calmness, mildness, and tenderness. These are not normally thought of as “manly” traits in our world, but I know from experience that people really appreciate a leader who shows these traits in the face of trials and attacks of various kinds. It is certainly a Godly trait to show calmness in the face of what appears to be disaster because we know that we serve a sovereign God and we know that Rom 8:28,29 applies to us at all times in all situations.

3. With Patience

We have to start this section with the following Scripture:

Rom 5:3 “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;”

Tribulation means “sufferings and problems” and it is only through walking through such situations with our Sovereign, loving Father beside us that we can truly develop patience with the world, ourselves, and others. Every day we interact with ourselves (we have self-set goals for the day and we argue with ourselves about how we are achieving our goals), we interact with a finite number of people (coworkers, people in other cars who drive awful, people taking your seat on the subway, customers over the “net” or whatever), and with “the world” (a very large number of people with whom you don’t directly interact but who nevertheless do things that affect you in various ways). Tribulation with all of those people (including ourselves with illness or whatever) that is handled in a Godly fashion leads to true patience. Praise God for tribulation!!

4. With Forbearance to each other in love

This is covered above, but in a different manner. By saying “to each other”, Paul means how we interact with fellow Christians. Paul addresses our reaction when a fellow Christian wrongs us here. Forbearance can mean self-control, restraint, or tolerance. We don’t always have to preach to another Christian when they wrong us. For one thing, we had better closely examine ourselves to make sure that we are not a fault also.

Matt 7:3 “And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?”

We are to demonstrate this forbearance to each other with Christian love and Christian love should be able to overlook some wrongs. Watch the ole’ pride!!!!

5. With diligence to preserve the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace

This unity of the Spirit is what should be our witness to the world that we are Christians united by the work of Jesus Christ. However, it is often true that division is what marks the Christians of the world rather than unity. Of course we cannot compromise the Scripture, but we should not be Baptists or Presbyterians or Methodists, but rather we should be Christians. Perhaps this is the most difficult

aspect of the walk and Paul elaborates further on it in the next few verses. However we must also not compromise the true Gospel of Jesus Christ and we see of lot of that in the ecumenism movement that began perhaps in the 1970's and continues strongly today. I am a Christian and I belong to a PCA church because its theology more closely matches the Bible than any other denomination that is available to me at this point in my life. As my wife and I have moved to different denominations as God has led us in our spiritual growth we have often been astounded to see members of the congregations to which we move that are very ignorant of the beliefs of their denomination. Rather they are there because their families have always belonged to that church and they are not able to obey the following Scripture

1 Peter 3:15 "but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;"

So be ready to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, but not at the expense of true truth.

**Eph 4:4 "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
Eph 4:5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
Eph 4:6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."**

Now we get to a bunch of "ones" that need some elaboration.

1. One Body

The word "body" here is a metaphor for the church. There is only one true church and we are going to see many aspects of it. It is organic in the sense that it has been growing since Adam and Eve. It consists of many different parts that must all function together for the entire organism to function properly. We will see more about that later, but for now the point is that there really is just ONE true church (the invisible church made up of true believers). We see the visible church and we see many different denominations, but there are still spiritual aspects of The Kingdom that we cannot see.

2. One Spirit

Of course here Paul is talking about the Holy Spirit and he is saying that we are one church because there is one Holy Spirit at work in the church giving gifts and working to sanctify the members and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit:

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Gal 5:23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

3. One Hope

This word does not mean the same thing at all in every day English as it does in Scripture. We use the word all the time in our every day conversation to mean that “it would be nice if so and so happened” or “I would like it if so and so happened”. Usually we use the word with no certainty at all that the event will actually happen. I might say that I hope that Joe will get well. But all that saying usually means is that it would please me greatly if Joe got well. It may mean that I would like for Joe’s sake for him to get well. But the every day use of the word “hope” carries no certainty at all. However, the Scriptural use of the word “hope” is entirely different. I hope that I will go to heaven means that I know that I will go to heaven and my hope is a certainty built on the promises of God Himself. As a Christian, I still can only say that I hope that I will get physically well here for I have no Biblical assurance that I will be physically healed here.

But in this sentence, our hope of our calling is a certainty because it is based upon the work of Jesus Christ and the promise of God Himself as we have seen in previous Scripture verses:

Eph 1:4 “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him....”

So the hope of our calling is a certainty. Praise God!!

4. One Lord

One Jesus Christ and that Jesus is the One defined by the Bible and not by any other extra-Biblical material. The problem of people preaching of another Jesus other than the One taught by the apostles had already appeared in the time of Paul:

2Cor 11:4 “For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.”

The Mormons teach a Jesus different from the Jesus of the Bible, the Mormons teach a Jesus different from the Jesus of the Bible. Many other people have been and are teaching a different Jesus, but there is only One Lord Jesus Christ. If you believe that Jesus did not die physically on the cross then you don’t believe in the real Jesus Christ. If you don’t believe that Jesus was resurrected physically from the dead then you don’t believe in the real Jesus Christ. If you don’t believe that Jesus was and is and has always been God then you don’t believe in the real Jesus Christ.

There is only One Lord!

5. One Faith

Here Paul is talking about the essence of our belief. Not a self-confidence that we developed after doing some study, but a supernatural faith that was imparted to us by God Himself and that was authored by Jesus Christ Himself as stated below.

Heb 12:2 "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

So there is only this faith that the Christian has and this is nothing for us to brag about for it also is a gift of God.

6. One Baptism

Here Paul is talking about our public identification as a discipline of Jesus Christ and not any particular type of baptism. He is saying also that there is no "second blessing" but that there is only one baptism. We have a public identification that states that we are now separated from the world and that we are now disciples of Jesus Christ and we move on from there to develop as His disciples.

7. One God of All

There is only one God. We are not polytheists. We are monotheists. God is three-in-one, which is His nature, but He is also One. He also is the same God over all people – Jews, Gentiles, free, slave, men, women, etc. The church is God's church, God is the One Who works in the church, and it exists for His glory.

Praise God!

Eph 4:7 "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Eph 4:8 Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men."

Eph 4:9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?

Eph 4:10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

Eph 4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

Eph 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

Eph 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ."

We will not spend much time on the gifts here because we have discussed them in great detail elsewhere (<http://livingtheology.com/HolySpiritII.htm>). It is important again to emphasize that Christ measures the gift and that each Child of God is given grace according to the measure of Christ Himself. Verse 8 says that when Jesus ascended to Heaven He set free from the Bosom of Abraham all the saved people of God of all ages past (a host of captives).

Luke 16:23 “And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

The teaching being that before the accepted sacrifice of Jesus, the saved people went to the bosom of Abraham and the lost people went to Hades. When Jesus ascended to Heaven, this acceptance of the ultimate sacrifice released the people from the bosom of Abraham to go to Heaven with Jesus. The bosom of Abraham is NOT purgatory, but was an intermediate state for the children of God before the accepted sacrifice of Jesus. So at the ascension of Jesus the children of God went with Jesus to heaven and Jesus gave gifts to the living children of God comprising the invisible church.

Verses 9 and 10 are in parenthesis because they are not in the oldest manuscripts and may not be in your translation. These verses emphasize that Jesus was always in heaven and that He descended to do the bidding of the Father and then ascended to complete the plans of God.

Verse 11 makes it clear that God did not give the same gifts to each of His children. “He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers” clearly says that each child of God is not a teacher and we must also remember that according to verse 7 the gifting is according to the measure of Christ.

Verse 12 clearly states the reason that these gifts are given. They are given not to lift up any particular person (other than Jesus) but for the equipping of God’s children (the saints) for our work of service to God AND for the building up of the church (the body of Christ).

Verse 13 tells us when the use of the gifts in the church will be finished! It will all be over when we all achieve the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of Jesus. When we are all mature according to the measuring rod of the fullness of Jesus Christ. When will that be??? It will be when we die or when Jesus comes again, whichever comes first. In other words, these gifts are just gifts for us to use while we are on earth and will not be needed when we pass from this earth into the forever.

1Cor 13:8 “Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.

1Cor 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part;

1Cor 13:10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

1Cor 13:11 When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

1Cor 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known.

1Cor 13:13 But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Why is love the greatest of all three? Because love alone will survive with us into the forever. We will not need faith or hope for we shall then know fully. Praise God!

Eph 4:14 “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

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,

Eph 4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

As a result of what? As a result of Jesus having given each of us Children of God a gift to be used to help all the saints do their work and to build up the invisible church to the unity of Christ, we then should be very different than the ordinary people of the world. We see so many people of the world who jump on every different spiritual idea that comes along (every wind of doctrine). We see people in large congregations in Atlanta who are told that God wants them to be rich and to be physically healed. The appeal that God wants all His children to be worldly successful is overwhelmingly attractive to many people. There are people leading large television ministries with trickery and lies and with Scripture quoted out of context. The deceitful scheming of some very bright, greedy men standing in pulpits attracts many people. Over the years, I have seen many people who seemed to be Christians and who seemed to be very enthusiastic about Bible study and applying the Word of God to their lives. But the fraction of those people who really “stick with the program” is small. My heart has been hurt many times as people have told me that they just don’t have the time to spend on such an intense Bible study at this time; or, I have heard people say that they have to spend more time with their family now and they will be back later – they don’t come back; or, I have heard people say that their job is just too demanding at this time in their life; or, I have seen people more attracted to some other philosophy that promises them more pleasures in this life.

We must always remember the following

Col 2:8 “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Col 2:9 For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

Col 2:10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

Col 2:11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;

Col 2:12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”

I was going to just use the first verse, but the rest of it is too good to leave out! So many people try to build up themselves and promise the followers so many earthly rewards. Check out every statement of such professors with the true Word of God.

There are many charlatans in the world making promises based upon God. Don't be misled, but Eph 4:15 tells us to speak the truth in love. If something you hear doesn't sound right, check it out with the Scripture and/or with a teacher and then if an opportunity presents itself speak the truth to the person in love. This verse also tells us to mature into all aspects of Jesus Christ.

Now let's pay special attention to the next verse:

Eph 4:16 "from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

The "body" here is, of course, the invisible church and we see again how it is like an organic substance. Each "individual part" is each true believer who has received a gift that is to be used and the "proper working" refers to each true believer using his/her gift(s) for the benefit of the entire church. The total church can only function properly when each child of God properly uses his/her gift(s). If a person's eyes don't function properly then the person cannot function totally as perfectly as he/she could if the eyes functioned correctly. If a child of God who has been gifted as a teacher does not teach then the entire body suffers. Here is another relevant Scripture:

Romans 12:5 - "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

As fellow members of the Body of Christ, we are all interconnected and we must think that way in all that we do. I request that every one reading this please go and read, or read again, the article

<http://livingtheology.com/HolySpiritII.htm>

and pay special attention to walking in the path provided by God Himself for His children.

Eph 4:17 "This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, Eph 4:18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; Eph 4:19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness."

What do we see as the fourth word here? I see “therefore” and that causes me to look back to what we have been reading to see why there is a “therefore”. What a wealth of information, insight, and promises we see to which the “therefore” refers! We see how we are to walk as a Christian in the world; we see that there is only one God, body, and Spirit; we see the gifts that God has given to His children to equip the body and to build up the body of Christ; and we see that because of all of that we are to be firm in the faith and not deceived by the world’s philosophies. Because of all of this, Paul proceeds to give us more details about how we are to walk in the world and some of what we definitely should not be doing.

Our walk as Christians in this world should seem inevitable to us, and not something that we have to force to occur. When we fail, we should sense a failure against our Holy Father. It should seem inevitable to us that we should more and more be walking a holy life in this world. We should not be people who are pleased to just walk as the Gentiles, but have a minimal contact with God for a couple of hours a week.

The Gentiles here refers to non-Christians whose minds are still blinded by Satan and who walk according to the uselessness of their minds. No matter how bright these people may seem to the world, their minds are useless because they cannot see the truth. They therefore judge everything by their useless comparisons. These people are ignorant because they have no knowledge of the truth; in fact, they probably even state that there is no such thing as truth. Their hearts are hard because they have not been born again. They have no proper measuring rod for any information. They have not come to the realization of how they stand before the almighty Holy God. These people have become insensitive to the real meaning of life and to the importance of the practice of the Christians in their community and elsewhere. They have given themselves over to sensuality for the purpose of practicing every kind of impurity with greediness.

People act as they think. We think about what we put into our minds. Our world today highly values the reasoning ability of people to solve problems, yet even as we learn more and more about the universe and the atomic level we see more and more problems in the world. To think clearly, a mind must be freed of the worldly standards that are so valued today. Our thinking is ultimately based upon what we hold to be true and of value to us. If our highest standards are only of this world then we will have very flawed thinking patterns. Having such flawed thinking patterns, the people then act upon those standards.

Sensuality means being sensual and sensual means pertaining to or affecting any of the senses or a sense organ; pertaining to or given to the gratification of the physical appetites; carnal rather than spiritual or intellectual; or worldly. Thus sensuality does not just mean pertaining to things sexual. So these worldly people have turned themselves totally over to a lifestyle that satisfies all of their physical appetites. They work and plan to get the best clothes, cars, houses, spouse, and other worldly things that satisfy their worldly lusts. They want their every perceived need met in as

fulfilling a way as possible. They may appear as wonderful people, because part of their sensuality is being thought of as highly as possible by their neighbors even though their heart is hard. These people may be in the visible churches, they may be deacons, they may be elders, and they may be preachers or Sunday School teachers. What they really are is what fulfills their heart-felt desire and it is often difficult or impossible for us to determine what their driving desires really are. We can only judge their words by the Word of God and pray for guidance to not be misled.

Now we come to a long sentence in which Paul leads us to know how to make sure that we ourselves are indeed growing in Christ.

**Eph 4:20 “But you did not learn Christ in this way,
Eph 4:21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,
Eph 4:22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,
Eph 4:23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,
Eph 4:24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”**

To what is Paul referring when he says “..... in this way”? He is talking about an intellectual pursuit. Most people think of learning a religion by an intellectual pursuit where they study books and study about the spiritual leader by studying under one of his followers. However the Greek word that Paul uses here that we interpret “learn Christ” means to literally “learn a person” rather than to learn about a person. Christians don’t spend their time learning the historical Jesus or studying about Jesus. We learn Jesus, just as you learn your son or your dad. You don’t read a diary about what your son did during the day to learn your son. You spend time with him, interact with him, and really try to learn him and not about him. I spend my life learning my wife, not learning about her. Again, I don’t read a daily diary of her activities. I spend time with her, interact with her in various situations, go through good and hard times with her at my side. I am learning her. In exactly the same way we learn Jesus.

Next we note that Paul says that “you have heard Him”. Some translations say “of Him”, but the word “of” is not in the Greek text. To whom is Paul talking? He is talking to several churches that were started after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So how did they hear Him? They heard Him the same way that we hear Him. Most non-Christians have heard of Jesus, but only God’s children have heard Him. We hear Jesus though the Scripture and through the proper exposition of the Word of God in Biblical preaching. A spiritually dead person cannot understand this, but we do for many times we read the Bible or hear some teaching or preaching and know that we are hearing Jesus Himself. This is supernatural and only can be discerned by those who have been truly born again.

The next unusual phrase that Paul uses is “taught in Him”. We don’t hear that in worldly conversations. What we hear is “taught about him” or “taught by him”, but Paul clearly says “taught in Him”. It is though Christ is the school in which we are taught or Christ Himself is the medium through which we are taught. John Stott said regarding this passage “when Jesus Christ is at once the subject, the object, and the environment of the moral instruction being given, we may have confidence that it is truly Christian.” He also states here that truth is in Jesus, so we cannot know truth apart from Jesus. We Christians start with the premise that “In the beginning, God”. From that starting point all events point to Jesus and it is as we learn Him that we learn the truth.

Now Paul gives us some positive actions that we can take. Note that he says that our old self “is being corrupted”. I would prefer that he had said “was being corrupted”, but he did not say that. So even as we learn Him, our old self is still being corrupted by our worldly environment. He then gives us some excellent God-breathed advice. We must forcefully lay aside the old self. That means that we stop feeding it with our worldly environment. We purposefully push aside the worldly influences that are further corrupting our old self.

Now we don’t just take care of the negative, we have to build in its place the positive. If we think that we can learn Him by just trying to clean up our life ourselves then we are badly mistaken. I am reminded of the story told by Jesus in the following:

Matt 12:43 “Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it.

Matt 12:44 Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came’; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order.

Matt 12:45 Then it goes, and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation.”

This is the picture of what happens to a person who just decides to “clean up his/her act” and “be a better person”. The house is cleaned, swept, and put in order, but the “house” is not occupied by the Holy Spirit. The person then becomes worse than he/she was in the beginning.

So, of course, we first must be born again. Then, having been born again, we with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit begin the process of denying growth to the old self. Simultaneously we begin another process and here I repeat verse 24:

Eph 4:24 “and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

There are several other excellent Scripture verses to correlate with this one and here are two of them:

Rom 13:14 “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Rom 6:13 “and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

We must purposefully put on the new self. This new self is in the likeness of God and has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth! Wow! This statement also reminds me of

1John 3:2 “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.”

A Christian is not just someone practicing self-actualization or being an active member of the human potential movement. A Christian is a born again person who, because of the desire for the inevitable result of a Holy Walk **here** puts off the old and puts on the new. This new self is the likeness of Jesus Himself! So how do we put that on? We learn Him!!!!

Eph 4:25 “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

Eph 4:26 Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, Eph 4:27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.”

The Greek word translated “falsehood” literally means “the lie” and is also used in

Rom 1:25 “For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

The use of the word in other such places and its context here indicate that “falsehood” does not mean just any lie, but “the lie”, meaning that it pertains to the opposite of the truth as we have seen only comes from Jesus Christ. So we should not speak of any false religion, but only of the truth of Jesus Christ. The “therefore” also reinforces this interpretation as “therefore” refers back to all that Paul has been teaching prior to this and that has to do with the putting on the new self, which is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. This each of us should do with everyone in whom we come in contact because we are all members of the same body as Paul has taught clearly before. In other words, the entire world should hear the same truth about Jesus Christ coming from each member of the invisible church.

Next he tells us that we can be angry, but we must not sin. Certainly anger itself is not a sin if it is righteous anger as Jesus expressed in

Matt 21:12 "And Jesus entered the temple and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves.

Matt 21:13 And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a robbers' den.'"

Mark 3:4 "And He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent.

Mark 3:5 And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored."

However, we seldom have real righteous anger. Usually our anger is rooted in our pride, personal feelings, and our self-image and when this type of anger is expressed it can lead to malice, slander, and other sins. We must not let this type of anger express itself in sinful attitudes or actions toward others. To be kept into the night means that we are seething in that anger and thinking of vengeance, which is certainly giving the devil a great opportunity to bring forth a sinful response toward others later. So we must recognize WHY we are feeling anger and deal with the root cause(s) of that anger quickly and effectively.

Eph 4:28 Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.

Eph 4:29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.

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

Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Eph 4:32 And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Paul continues to deal with sinful natural occurrences of our pre-birth selves and what we should be doing to replace such sinful actions in our lives. Whereas before we stole, we are to steal no longer. Carefully consider also what is stealing for you might not think that you steal. He then gives us the positive aspect of our new life that must replace that former sinful manner. Instead of stealing we should now do good work. He also gives us the reason for our doing the good work: so that we will have something to share with people in need! We are not to do good work to build up mansions of glory for us here on earth as the worldly person reasons, but we are to do good work so that we can share with those in need. What a change in attitude!

We also should not let any unwholesome word leave our mouth. The Greek word translated "unwholesome" here literally means "corrupt" or "corrupting" and is used

in everyday Greek for the rotting of fruit. Surely we are all reminded here of James chapter 3 on the tongue. James also tells us in verse 8 that no one can control the tongue. So how are we to talk such that we use **“only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.”** Here again I am reminded of my Granny who said that if you can’t say anything nice about someone, don’t say anything at all. I could reply at this point that I was a very quiet child!

Since no one can control the tongue that means that only God can control the tongue of His born-again child. This is part of the process of sanctification and how do we contribute to this process? We need to fill our mind with the Word of God and pray continually as Paul lastly commands us in the following:

1Thes 5:12 “But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 1Thes 5:13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

1Thes 5:14 And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.

1Thes 5:15 See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men.

1Thes 5:16 Rejoice always;

1Thes 5:17 pray without ceasing;”

If we really immerse ourselves in the Word of God and pray without ceasing, then God can control our tongue. What a great goal for us to have regarding our speech and our written words (email or whatever): **“only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.”** God help me, a sinner.

Next note that Paul says that we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit who has sealed us for the day of redemption. [An aside: Here we have a powerful verse for why we will never lose our salvation for God the Holy Spirit Himself has sealed us for that final day!] How it must grieve the Holy Spirit who diligently works in us for us to speak words that tear down others in the Body of Christ.

Next Paul tells us to put aside all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slandering, and malice. It is awful for such to be seen in the Body of Christ for such actually tears down the structure rather than rebuilding it (rather like the effect of bacteria on a living organism). He then tells us the characteristics that will oppose such evil and those are being kind to one another, tender-hearted, and forgiving each other. With these three characteristics being dominant, it is impossible for the six above evil characteristics to exist. It is rather like these three are the antibiotics for the six bacteria.

Now note our model for this behavior: God in Christ who has forgiven us! We need to constantly remember the sinful self that we were when Christ died for us and forgave us. This should be enough motivation for us to forgive anyone and to have all of the above Christ-like characteristics.

What a work God is doing in each of His children! Our cooperation in the sanctification process should be automatic and without hesitation and I pray for that cooperation in all of us, certainly in me in whom I see so many of the evil characteristics still with a foothold in my life. Pray without ceasing for all of us, the children of God.

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