

EPHESIANS PART XIII; 4:25-32

SPEAKING THE TRUTH = LIVING OUT THE TRUTH

Please turn in your bibles to Ephesians 4:25.

Last week we saw how the Gentile believers are no longer seen as Gentiles. That is important, as it shows how once someone becomes a part of the family of God, their identity changes. And with this change in identity, there has to, by necessity be a change of life. Paul sorted this idea by showing that the new believers were to no longer live as they once had. Why? Because their old way of life, which Paul likened to an old change of clothes, was sensual and greedy (extortative) to practice every kind of impurity. This lifestyle was lived out due to the fact that the Gentiles were ignorant of the ways of God. This was willful ignorance that came about due to their hardness of heart, which allowed them to give themselves over to the more, base nature all humans possess.

That is why, when speaking of the new life and identity they now have, Paul reverses the imagery of an old suit of clothes and moves the image of a new suit of clothes. Now remember, unless you were rich, you only had one suit of clothes. So, this would have stood out in the minds of the new believers. But that imagery infers that there is something volitional in this new life. That is, there is something we have to do. Remember the concept of reciprocity. Relationships in that day were based on this. It isn't a new concept. And it isn't an evil one either. It does not, as some suppose, negate faith. Abraham, had to comply with the term of circumcision, among other things after he entered into his covenant with God. He, Abraham was not allowed to refuse this. It was a condition of the covenant God made with him. Jesus has purchased our salvation with His death, burial and resurrection, yes. But Paul is making the case that now that that work has been done, we have some responsibilities. Remember, there is more to salvation than just "getting saved". We are to be imagers – a point Paul has already made when using creation language. Being an imager of God requires a new/ different way of living. And now that Paul has explained why the old life is counter to God, and what the old clothing looked like, he will now explain what the new clothing looks like. Let's begin back at verse 17 and work our way to the last part of the chapter.

Eph. 4:17 Now this I say and ^dtestify in the Lord, ^ethat you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, ^fin the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They ^gare darkened in their understanding, ^halienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to ⁱtheir hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They ^jhave become callous and ^khave given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you ^llearned Christ!— ²¹ assuming that ^myou have heard about him and ⁿwere taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to ^oput off ^pyour old self, ⁶ which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through ^qdeceitful desires, ²³ and ^rto be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on ^sthe new self, ^tcreated after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Eph. 4:25 Therefore, **having put away falsehood**, let each one of you "speak the truth with his neighbor, for ^vwe are members one of another. ²⁶ ^wBe angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and ^xgive no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather ^ylet him labor, ^zdoing honest work with his own hands, so ^athat he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ ^bLet no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give ^cgrace to those who hear. ³⁰ And ^ddo not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, ^eby whom you were sealed for the day of ^fredemption. ³¹ ^gLet all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² ^hBe kind to one another, tenderhearted, ⁱforgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

The old way of life was cast off like an old garment. The old person is not who these Christians are anymore. The old lifestyle was self-destructive, full of wicked desires and deceptions. V. 22 refers not just to moral corruption but to a moral corruption that leads to bodily corruption—disease, decay, and death.¹

Instead, they have been renewed in their minds, indeed in the whole tenor or spirit of their minds. Their basic thought patterns and attitudes have changed and they have clothed themselves with the new person which was in accord with the way God intended them to be in the first place when humans were created in righteousness. Paul has the Genesis creation story in mind here, and so the renewal of the image of God within the believer.²

We need to see how Paul speaks of our volition and how this is a process. We aren't just "zapped" We may be "zapped" with the righteousness of Jesus, which has been imputed to us. That represents the way we are "seen" by God until we come to the fruition of that state in the creation. But for now, though God sees us that way, we have to be seen by others as different; changed from the way we once were/ lived. That is where Paul comes in with the metaphor of changing clothes. Each set of clothes represents a life/ lifestyle: the old one and the new one.

Look at the language Paul uses in verse 25. He states that they have "put away" the language used of the old garment. That helps us to zero in on what he means by falsehood here. He is not using 'falsehood' not to speak of lying, though we are not to lie. But this expression links falsehood to the old life. Just as the old life/ clothes are to be put away, so is this falsehood. What is this falsehood? The link tells us. The falsehood is the lie of paganism which was the source/ root of their old lives. They had been living a lie. Paganism is/ was a lie all the way from the false gods to the theology/ worldview expectations that came with them. We can also see that he is speaking of in-house issues here because he states that we are members of one another. That is important to see.

Though this would also be applicable to dealing with anyone, believer or not, we should pay close attention to the wording just for bible study purposes. This also frames the context of the rest of the paragraph.

Remember that the main theme of the letter is that of unity between Jewish and Gentile believer. Truth is to reign here. Paul hasn't pulled any punches when it comes to how he speaks to the new believers. He has not painted a pretty picture of their former culture/ people. By now Paul is a veteran of dealing with cross-cultural issues. He knows that there will inevitable be tough issues on the table. All these things frame what he says next, which is within the overall context of the fact that we are all members of one another. We are all tied together from now on and we should be mindful of that as we enter into this new life/ suit of clothes.

²⁶ ^wBe angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and ^xgive no opportunity to the devil.

Paul is actually quoting the OT here.

Zech. 8:16

¹⁶ These are the things that you shall do: ^qSpeak the truth to one another; ^rrender in your gates judgments ^sthat are true and make for peace; ¹⁷ ^tdo not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and ^ulove no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD.

Psa. 4:3,4

***But know that the LORD has ⁱset apart ^jthe godly for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.***

***^kBe angry, ² and do not sin;
^lponder in your own hearts ^mon your beds, and be silent. *Selah****

Notice the context of the verses he's quoting and how they mesh with the subject in Ephesians. (Explain)

The point here, is to deal with matters before they fester, or perhaps before anger turns into sin. It is one thing to be angry and to react properly to it, for there is a place for righteous anger in the faith. (Even so, Paul never exhorts anyone to "be righteously angry.") But in the passion of the moment, one may say or do something which amounts to sin. To do this is to give the Devil an opportunity to work even among Christians.

²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather ^ylet him labor, ^zdoing honest work with his own hands, so ^athat he may have something to share with anyone in need.

1Cor. 6:9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous² will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: ^xneither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who

practice homosexuality,^{3 10} nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Peter 4:15

¹⁵ But ^elet none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or ^fas a meddler.

In vv. 28–32 Paul makes clear what sort of changed behavior he has in mind. The thief should no longer steal (cf. 1 Cor. 6:10; 1 Pet. 4:15). Instead he should engage in manual labor so that he can have something to give, helping the needy. Here as regularly elsewhere, Paul does not just give an exhortation but also states the purpose of the exhortation, assuming that sometimes a rationale and a clear intended outcome is required.

. ²⁹ ^b*Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give ^cgrace to those who hear.*

Paul also says (v. 29) that no rotten words should come out of our mouths, by which he means no slander, no cursing, no abusive speech. Rather, one's speech should be edifying and gracious, benefiting the hearer. Paul is attacking those sins which divide and disrupt the unity of the body of Christ, including sins of speech.

. ³⁰ And ^d*do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, ^eby whom you were sealed for the day of ^fredemption.*

V. 30 speaks of not grieving the Holy Spirit of God. God can be grieved.¹⁰⁸ This is not the same as quenching the Spirit, for stifling spiritual gifts is not in view here. Rather sinning in such a way that the Spirit might have to withdraw from the believer is in view. Note the personal nature of the Holy Spirit: “one can only grieve a person.” Paul is once again citing from the OT and that helps us to define what ‘grieving the Holy Spirit means.

**Is. 63:10 ^yBut they rebelled
 ^zand grieved his Holy Spirit;
 therefore he turned to be their enemy,
 and himself fought against them.**

We can see that grieving the Holy Spirit comes about by rebelling against God. That is a scary thing. Think about What it means for God to become your enemy. And if we are thinking that that is an OT perspective, we can look at Hebrews 6 for NT clarification. Apostasy is a very real thing. One need only look at Judas Iscariot and how Peter spoke of him as one who had fallen through apostasy. Though one has been sealed in the Spirit (cf. **2 Cor. 1:21–22 and Eph. 1:13–14**) “for the day of redemption,” Paul does not rule out something such as willful apostasy breaking that seal.

³¹ ^gLet all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² ^hBe kind to one another, tenderhearted, ⁱforgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

In v. 31 Paul rules out all bitterness, rage, shouting, and cursing that arises from malice. “Malice can take many forms, of which five examples are given: silently harbored grudge, indignant outburst, seething rage, public quarrel, and slanderous taunt.” This is perhaps to be seen as a sequence or a description of an anger cycle from start to finish, beginning internally and progressing to full-blown expression. “The rhetorical effect of this accumulation of terms for anger is powerful, and, together with the summarizing phrase ‘along with all malice,’ indicates that anger in all its forms, together with every form of malice associated with it, is to be removed completely from them.” Instead, Christians are to be kind to one another and compassionate. Graciousness toward one another is to be “just as God in Christ was gracious toward you.” This suggests that human graciousness is to be no less gracious or charitable but rather commensurate with the divine graciousness one has received. The present participle here, *charisomenoi*, “being gracious,” suggests that this activity is to be unceasing.

Closing