



#11 In the Ephesians Series

CONTRAST

Forest Park Church of Christ

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1

Paul has commanded us to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called” (Ephesians 4:1).

- In Ephesians 4:17 Paul told us that this means we do not live like the world.
- We cannot behave like the culture around us.

This was pictured as a three step process:

1. Put off the old self which is corrupted by our deceitful desires,
2. Be renewed in our minds,
3. Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Although the number of explicit commands within Ephesians have been rather sparse thus far, a significant turn occurs here.

- Within the next eight verses, Paul gives eleven commands to follow.
- He moves solidly here from philosophy to application
- He is providing specific actions that he expects us to obey in Christ.

In Ephesians 4:25-32 we are going learn what it means to “put off the old self” and “put on the new self.”

- Paul sets this up with a set of contrasts.
- Paul will say that we must no longer do this and instead must do this.
- Paul is describing for us what the renewed mind and new self looks like.

As we read these contrasts, I want us to remember that this is not simply a behavior change: “stop this and do this.”

- These actions come from the renewing of the mind.

- As our minds are being taken out of the world and into the word, then we will stop certain behaviors and will participate in other behaviors.

2 **Ephesians 4:25-32**

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 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 grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

3

1. SPEAK TRUTH

Ephesians 4:25

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Notice that the opening phrase *therefore, having put away falsehood* stands as a kind of summary of our previous passage.

- The Gentiles ultimately walk in futility because they embrace falsehood rather than the truth.
- Romans 1:25 reminds us that, “they exchanged the truth about God for a lie.”
- Their life is one gigantic falsehood, a self-imagined fantasyland where God is not God.

4:20-21

“But that is not the way you learned Christ... as the truth is in Jesus”

As recipients of the truth of Christ, we must each *speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.*

This command was important enough for Paul to repeat it twice within the same chapter.

- This is not a new command for God's people.
- Zechariah, who prophesied at the same time as Haggai, said this to the rebuilding people of Judah:

ZECHARIAH 8:16–17

These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD.

A loving community grounded in truth is our open-handed offer to a world grasping for meaning in all the futility.

For the sake of one another and a watching world, we must not only avoid lying to one another; we must speak honestly to each other.

When I think about speaking honestly my mind seems to go back to men like Joshua and Caleb.

When the spies return, they carry a huge cluster of grapes on a pole between them. They talk about the abundance of the land, "it does flow with milk and honey." But ten of the spies are clearly frightened by the prospect of conquest.

Numbers 13:28, 33

"The people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

The "bad report" of the ten spies is contagious.

- By nightfall, their negative assessment of the danger has spread throughout the camp,
- and with it the infectious fear of these tribal leaders.

Numbers 14:1

"That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud"

- Women were sobbing that their husbands would be killed in battle and their children left fatherless.
- By morning, the men were ready to rebel, select another leader, and return to Egypt.

But in the midst of this fear and unbelief two men stood firm in faith and hope -- Caleb and Joshua.

Numbers 13:30

"Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, 'We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.'"

The next day also, Caleb and Joshua try to sway the gathered Israelite crowds with their faith:

Numbers 14:7-9

4

"The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the LORD (Yahweh) is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them."

Notice the positive attitude.

- Notice the explicit mention of the Lord in their words.
- The ten spies don't even mention the LORD,
- only what they have seen that terrifies them.
- Joshua and Caleb have seen the same giants and the same heavily fortified cities,
- but they are looking through lenses of faith.

- They see the LORD enabling them to victory.

They were speaking Truth!! God said it was theirs and it was theirs.

- All the fear in the world
- All the walls
- All the giants
- All the tears
- All the murmuring
- All the Complaining

WOULD NEVER CHANGE THAT

Joshua also realized that the truth is we all personally decide whether or not we want to walk in it.

Joshua 24:15

5 *“But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD”*

6

Ephesians 4:26

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

7

2. Sinless Anger

The four commands given in these two verses all center around how we are to treat our anger.

- The first two orders are a direct quotation of Psalm 4:4, “Be angry, and do not sin.”
- The second set guide us in how to specifically keep our anger from leading us into sin.

Paul does not mean that Christians should be characterized by anger, but that they should appropriately express anger on certain occasions.

That all anger is not sinful is demonstrated by the life of Jesus,

- Who at times was angry (Mark 3:5)
- Yet was without sin (Heb. 4:15)

As when Jesus beheld the flagrant defiling of the temple for personal gain, there is a righteous anger to have in the face of sin and evil. Indeed, wrath is an attribute of God that we often prefer to overlook as much as possible. Never forget that Paul gives us one command to be angry and three warnings against the dangers of anger.

Again, *“but that is not the way you learned Christ.”*

The gospel of peace that is far mightier than any “revolution” conceived by man.

God is righteous, but he is also love (1 John 4:8). And love is patient (1 Corinthians 13:4).

- That’s why God repeatedly describes himself in Scripture as “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nahum 1:3).
- God is slow to anger, “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).
- God will bring his righteous judgment to bear on the unrepentant guilty (Exodus 34:7), but he “does not afflict from his heart” (Lamentations 3:33).
- And he moves with a measured, merciful, loving slowness.

So what does Christ-like anger look like?

8

A: We should care more about God’s reputation than our own!

- Righteous anger is roused by evil that perverts God’s purpose and defaces his goodness.

9 B: Sinless Anger considers our faults first.

- Righteous anger first sees the logs in our own eyes (Matthew 7:5).
- We are humbled, grieved, and angered by our own perverting of God's goodness and we repent before addressing anyone else's.

10 C: Sinless anger is grieved by evil.

- Jesus did flip tables in the temple, but he was deeply grieved over the sin that made it necessary (Matthew 23:37).
- Anger with no grief about the evil may be evidence of a lack of love in us.

11 D: Christ like anger is governed by God

- God's love is slow to be expressed
- We truly want mercy to triumph over judgment for others (James 2:13),
- We must remember Jesus's mercy toward us and that he first came carrying a cross before coming bearing a sword.

12 E: Righteous anger acts swiftly when necessary.

Some forms of evil require us to be quick to speak and quick to act.

- injustice,
- abuse (emotional, physical, sexual),
- sex trafficking,
- human slavery,
- adultery,
- persecution,
- May call for urgent, immediate rescue (Proverbs 24:11).

If you want to see love-governed anger in operation, look at Jesus.

- Jesus knew a day of judgment was coming when he would come to earth as the King of kings and “tread [his enemies in] the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God” (Revelation 19:15–16).
- But long before bringing judgment, he came to bring salvation to his enemies (John 12:47; Romans 5:8). And when he came to save, he rarely expressed anger.

And those who walk closest with Jesus are also marked by this remarkable patience with sinners.

- They too are “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (James 1:19).
- They do get angry, but like Jesus, their anger is laced with grief (Mark 3:5).
- Occasionally they flip tables in the temple (John 2:15–17), but they also weep over Jerusalem (Luke 13:34).

13

Ephesians 4:28

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

14

3. Givers not Takers

- The command is for the thief no longer to steal,
- Followed by the positive call to do honest work that creates something to share with others.

This is a remarkably simple display of the radical reversal of the gospel in the life of a Christian.

- A thief steals because he only has regard for himself, not for anyone else.
- He thinks nothing (or at least little) of the person from whom he takes.
- He only thinks about what he desires.

The gospel changes the heart and turns the thief away from stealing.

- But it does not leave his hands idle; instead, we are urged to work.
- And we work that we might be able to give.
- The gospel moves us from taking to giving as we follow Him who did not even spare His own Son to save us.

15

Ephesians 4:29

*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 grace to those who hear.
30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

16

4. Building up not Tearing Down

The use of the word *corrupting* is particularly telling here.

Jesus used this same word to describe both fruit and fish within the Gospels.

*So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear **bad fruit**, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.*

MATTHEW 7:17–20

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away **the bad**. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Synonyms of this word include putrid, rotten, and spoiled.

Our speech can easily be just as corrosive.

We can speak in such a way that brings rot or in a way that brings grace.

- 17** **Proverbs 18:21**
“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.”

Speaking graciously for the good of building others up is not flattery.

- Flattery is one of the most subtle forms of corrupting speech.
- For speech that truly gives grace rather than corruption, we again lean upon the command to speak the truth in love.
- Truthful words spoken with a genuine compassion for the other person’s good will always build up in the long run rather than corrupt.

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

Remember that through the Holy Spirit, we have been sealed for redemption and guaranteed our inheritance in the Lord.

- The Spirit is dwelling within us and renewing us daily.
- He enables us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling.
- He empowers us to no longer walk as the Gentiles do.
- He is our Comforter, the source of our strength to conform to the image of Christ.
- He applies the grace of Christ to us.

Therefore, to speak in a corrupting manner is to place ourselves directly against the work of the Holy Spirit.

- Our chief motivation for dealing with sin should be to avoid causing sorrow to our companion our Comforter.
- How wrong is it that we should cause grief to the One who speaks peace and life to our souls!

Eph 4:31

18 *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

19 5. Kind not Bitter

Finally, the apostle concludes our section and chapter with a series of slightly more generalized commands regarding how we are to treat one another.

- Like the previous commands, these again form a negative/positive parallel.

Verse 31 gives us the negative actions that we must avoid:

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

Verse 32 is the opposite, positive response:

- *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

The inverse of

- bitterness and wrath is forgiveness,
- of anger, clamor, and slander is kindness,
- of malice is tenderheartedness.

20

Conclusion:

Notice finally that our kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness toward one another derives from how Christ has forgiven us.

Although we despised Him, rejected Him, and refused to esteem Him (Isaiah 53:3), Jesus remains our Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for us.

Christ is the supreme example of kindness, of tenderness, and of forgiveness.

- He has forgiven us of far greater sins than anyone will ever be able to commit against us.
- He is ever tender and compassionate toward His people, even when we repeatedly turn away from Him and back to our sin.
- He is kind and pleasant to us. In Matthew 11:30,
- He said that His “yoke is easy”, which happens to be the same word used in verse 32 for *kind*. He is easy and good to His people.

He is also the perfect giver of grace, overcoming the corruption of our sins.

- He is not like the thief who “comes only to steal and kill and destroy”;
- He came to give us life in abundance (John 10:10).
- In His righteous anger against our sins, He took them upon Himself and paid our debt entirely.
- He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6),
- He has united us together in Himself.

Brothers and sisters, putting off the old self and putting on the new self begins by setting our gaze steadfastly upon Christ, “the founder and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

Our obedience to these commands is only possible in Him and through Him.