

In the preceding verses, the Apostle has explained to the churches that through the teaching and preaching of the Word that they are to be built up, attaining the measure of the stature of Christ! (4:13) We are all gifted as Christ had determined to be a part of a maturing body of believers. (4:7) We are to put off the old self, to have a new way of thinking, and to put on the new self which is Christ like. (4:22-24)

Paul gets even more practical in the application in our verses for today. He has gone from the very spiritual sense of being empowered by the Holy Spirit to be like Christ, to a more illustrative description of putting off the old man and putting on the new, to now describing actions that result from this exchange. <sup>25</sup> *Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.*

Paul described the old man as being corrupt through deceitful desires. The old man is deceived by what those desires promise. He also deceives others to obtain those desires. Whether it is sexual, financial, prideful, or any other kind of selfish motivation, the old self will not hesitate to distort the truth to get what he is after.

Whether it is telling the girl, "I love you", or neglecting to tell the loan officer the whole story, falsehood is an often used tool of the old man. It reminds me of Jacob deceiving Laban while Laban is deceiving Jacob. (See the back and forth in Genesis 31) **We deceive others to sin against them and all the while sin is deceiving us.** (Hebrews 3:13)

Paul is reminding the church that we must be honest with our neighbor because they are part of the same body to which we belong. We are a part of the body of Christ. To deceive my fellow believer is to harm myself. I call this putting on the "God Perspective Glasses". How does God see what I am doing? What is the real consequence of my action? What is the real intent of my heart? I know how the old man can justify any action, but what does the life of Christ in me see in this choice I am making?

Paul goes on with his list of descriptions of the difference between the old and new self. <sup>26</sup> *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,* Anger is like a fever telling you that you are sick and need to stop and rest. It is not a sin to be angry. Jesus was angry at times. It is an emotional response to a situation. What you do with that emotion is where sin can enter in. When we become angry, the first thing we should do is stop and consider the source of our anger. Were we offended by a comment? Are we not having our way? Is there some unrighteous act? In Jesus' case, He was always angered by unrighteousness that was keeping the goodness of God from people. He was angry at religious leaders who didn't want Him to heal on the Sabbath. (Mark 3:5) I assume He was angry with the merchants in the Temple because with all the noise Gentiles could not use

**Commented [notes1]: Ephesians 4:13 (ESV)**  
<sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

**Commented [notes2]: Ephesians 4:7 (ESV)**  
<sup>7</sup> But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

**Commented [notes3]: Ephesians 4:22-24 (ESV)**  
<sup>22</sup> to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

**Commented [notes4]: Hebrews 3:13 (ESV)**  
<sup>13</sup> But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

**Commented [notes5]: Mark 3:5 (ESV)**  
<sup>5</sup> And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." EHe stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

it as a House of Prayer. (Matthew 21:13) This is righteous anger that is completely appropriate. We should hate evil. (Psalm 97:10) Our response to that anger might become sin if we do not look to the Lord for direction. We may take justice into our own hands and make matters worse. An example of this is those who try to kill abortion doctors. You may be righteously angry at the loss of innocent lives, but what you do with that anger should not violate the laws of God. You may end up doing more harm than good to your cause.

We tend to get angry because our pride is hurt. We men are prone to letting our anger build and get out of control. Perhaps that is partly due to testosterone, but we can't use that as an excuse. Ultimately it is due to our sinful nature. If we have put on the new man, we have the power to stop and consider the source of our anger. We can let go of it and ask for the peace of Christ to fill our hearts. (John 14:27)

I'm not saying it is easy. In many cases, we learned from our father to deal with stress by screaming and being forceful. When stress increases, we fall into a cycle that builds and builds until we explode. That kind of uncontrolled rage is definitely sinful. It is anger out of control. If this is a pattern you have developed, I encourage you to get on your face before the Lord and plead to be set free from the pattern. You have to get to the point where you are desperate for change before you will change a learned pattern. You have to be willing to do whatever God asks of you. You must also recognize that there is no excuse for those who have put on the new man and thus quit making excuses. Face it. Repent and do whatever is necessary to let the Spirit of God prevail in the situations that set you off. You are a new creation in Christ. (2Corinthians 5:17)

The last part of that verse is especially helpful for married couples. Don't go to bed angry. If you have fallen for that childish game we call the silent treatment, humble yourself and recognize your part in the problem and apologize. "Husbands love your wives," the Scripture commands (Ephesians 5:25), not some of the time but all the time and in every situation. Act in love. Let go of it, and get over it before your head hits the pillow. The other person can stay angry if they want to, but you don't have to let anger devour you! Put on the "God Perspective Glasses" and realize what a little thing the issue is in the light of eternity and the calling to which God has called you. (2 Corinthians 4:17)

*27 and give no opportunity to the devil.* We can add this to the previous injunction, or take it separately. Anger can certainly open the door to the devil if you let it. I've seen people filled with rage and their eyes told me that there was someone else in control. We see it in the news more and more these days. Someone gets angry and kills the one that has incited the anger in them or sometimes kills the one that person loves just to hurt them. It is the Devil that has come to kill, steal, and destroy. (John 10:10) Rage often begins with destroying objects before it moves on to harming people verbally or physically. There is no place in the new self for either. We are to submit to God and resist the Devil. (James 4:7)

**Commented [notes6]: Matthew 21:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer;' but you make it a den of robbers.

**Commented [notes7]: Psalm 97:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> O you who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

**Commented [notes8]: John 14:27 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

**Commented [notes9]: John 14:27 (ESV)**

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**Commented [notes10]: Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

**Commented [notes11]: 2 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

**Commented [notes12]: John 10:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

**Commented [notes13]: James 4:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

The word translated "opportunity" (topos) can also mean space. It is the Greek word from which we get topography. It was used of Joseph and Mary not finding "room" in the Inn. (Luke 2:7) Is there space in your life for the devil? Anything that causes you to become angry to the point of rage, of evil behavior, is a space where Satan has been given permission to work his destruction. Pornography can be the space. (James 1:20-21) Greed can be as well. Selfishness in all its forms is a space for the enemy of your soul to gain a foothold to keep you from loving God and others as yourself.

What do we do about it? Simple really! Quit giving him the space! Yield it to God. (Romans 6:14) If it's pride, have a reality check. If it is something you insist you must have, give it up as an offering to God. Don't give the Devil a foothold in your life!

Other footholds are usually related to self-gratification. When we don't know the joy of the Lord and pleasure that comes from a deep and rich relationship with Him, we look for other things to fill that need we have. Because those things only partially fill the void, they leave us wanting more and more, which in turn is more and more destructive. (4:19) Break the cycle! Give the space to God and the Devil must flee!

*<sup>28</sup> 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.* The ancient world had more of a problem with this than we do today in developed nations. When you are hungry, or your children are hungry, theft was a very real temptation. You could go into your neighbor's field when you knew he was away and fill the ache in your stomach with his produce. Because theft was more common place, it was a temptation to make a living taking from those who were prosperous. The new self was to give that up and make an honest living working with our own hands to be able to give to those in need.

Some in the early church used the excuse that Jesus was going to return at any time so they didn't need to work. They would even say it was more spiritual to not work, but wait on the Lord's coming. Paul had to tell the Thessalonians to not feed the lazy believers who refused to work. (2Thessalonians 3:10-12) We should be laboring to meet the needs of our family and those who can no longer work because of age or illness. I'm so pleased to say that this congregation does just that. Even some of you who are just getting by, share what little you have if you know of someone who has a greater need. That is the action of the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

*<sup>29</sup> 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.* This is an area that our city has always struggled. In fact, I could say this is an area where the Devil has had a foothold. Corrupt talk includes gossip. (Proverbs 16:28) Gossip does not build up. It does not minister grace to those that hear. It is one thing to be factual about a situation, to speak the truth in love. It is another to guess the cause of a situation or pass on reports that you don't know to be true. It is another to try to get people to take your side in a

**Commented [notes14]: Luke 2:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

**Commented [notes15]: James 1:20-21 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.  
<sup>21</sup> Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

**Commented [notes16]: Romans 6:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

**Commented [notes17]: Ephesians 4:19 (NIV)**

<sup>19</sup> Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

**Commented [notes18]: 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.  
<sup>11</sup> For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies.  
<sup>12</sup> Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

**Commented [notes19]: Proverbs 16:28 (NIV)**

<sup>28</sup> A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.

difference. I've had to clear up gossip by factually addressing what was circulating. That shouldn't be necessary in a group of people who claim to be living the new life.

Before we speak, those who are in the new self get a check in our spirit whether we should say something or not. You know when you are violating the warning of the Spirit. Don't do it. You harm the body that you are a part of. If someone comes to you with gossip, change the subject or ask them if it is gossip. Remind them that we are harming ourselves when we gossip. Yes, they might be offended, but how else will we stop this epidemic in our town. Notice the guidelines that Paul gives us, "...only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." Ask yourself if what you are about to say builds others up, fits the occasion, and gives grace to those that hear.

*<sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* Once again, we can see this as an addition to the last instruction, or as an instruction that stands on its own. As an addition to the last instruction it tells us that corrupting talk is something that grieves the Spirit. Why would you want to grieve the Spirit that seals you for the day of redemption? Let the words from your lips be gracious and loving, truthful, yes, but always in gentleness. (4:1-3)

But there are many other ways to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. We grieve Him whenever we walk in that old self. When selfishness reigns, when we put ourselves on the throne of our heart and do what we desire, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature, we grieve the One that has made His home in us to make us holy. We grieve the One that died that we might live forever with Him. The grief is not just because we are ignoring His will, but that we are harming ourselves and the body of which we are a part. It is the grief of one who loves their child and sees them making wrong choices. It is the grief of a spouse who sees their partner making choices that they know is indifferent to what they feel. (5:32)

I believe that we grieve the Spirit when we refuse to take the time to be still before the Lord and share our heart with Him and hear His heart for us. (Psalm 46:10) It's when we neglect the Word of God and get busy with all the temporal things of life. It is placing the secondary things before the eternal things. It borders on idolatry. It breaks His heart.

*<sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.* Here the Apostle just sums it all up. Taking off the old self means to let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and all malice be put away. You shouldn't slander anyone, be bitter toward anyone, let anger remain, or scream out over an issue that has divided people, which is the meaning of clamor. The original Greek word here comes from the sound a crow makes. Don't stir the pot. Don't wish any harm. Instead of praying the psychics fail in business and leave, let's pray they are born again! Instead of joining in a battle over some issue that arises in the future, let's seek to be peacemakers.

**Commented [notes20]: Ephesians 4:1-3 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,  
<sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,  
<sup>3</sup> eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**Commented [notes21]: Ephesians 5:32 (ESV)**

<sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

**Commented [notes22]: Psalm 46:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" E

(Matthew 5:9) We should never compromise the Gospel, but let us pursue peace in the non-essentials.

**Commented [notes23]: Matthew 5:9 (ESV)**  
<sup>9</sup>“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

I like the wording here. *Let* it be put away. Allow it to be gone. The only reason we let it remain is because we do not let the Spirit put it away from us. He is trying, but we have to yield. (Romans 6:12-13)

**Commented [notes24]: Romans 6:12-13 (ESV)**  
<sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.  
<sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

Finally, <sup>32</sup> *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* Paul continually gives us the same motivating reason for acting in a way that pleases God. It is because that is the way God has treated you. Paul got it from the teachings of Jesus. (Matthew 18:33) How kind has God been to you? Remember, justice would mean every one of us would be in the Lake of Fire for our rebellion against God. Anything better than that is kindness, tenderhearted, and forgiving. If we got real in regards to all the kindness of God toward us, we could go on all day and night listing the many things. His kindness didn't end when we took it for granted. It didn't end when we continued to sin. It didn't end when we fell far short of all He had planned for us. It didn't end when we neglected Him.

**Commented [notes25]: Matthew 18:33 (ESV)**  
<sup>33</sup> And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?"

I hope you **know how tenderhearted God is toward you. It is the source of having a tender heart toward others.** I can't describe it other than to say that He feels all that you feel. He loves you more than you can comprehend. The love your heart longs for is found in His heart toward you. You'll only know the fullness of it by developing your relationship with Him.

Forgiveness! We have unconditional forgiveness not based on what we have done but what He did for us. (Ephesians 2:8-9) People ask me how they can possibly forgive someone who has done them such harm. Look at Jesus' forgiveness of your sins. That's how. Realize you did nothing to deserve forgiveness, and then you'll see that the offending party doesn't need to do anything for you to be able to forgive them. God forgave you because of what Jesus did, not because of what you did. Accept the grace and love of God to forgive.

**Commented [notes26]: Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)**  
<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,  
<sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

These are great guidelines to let us know if we are in the new self or old self. If you are every wondering, here is a yardstick to measure how you are doing at letting the new life prevail in you. They are not a measure you use on others, but one by which we measure ourselves that we might be conformed to the stature of the fullness of Christ.

#### Questions

- 1 Why do we lie?
- 2 What is anger?
- 3 What should we do with anger?
- 4 What is "opportunity" in verse 27?
- 5 Is there a space in your life for the Devil?

- 6 What is the Protestant work ethic?
- 7 What is the description of godly speech?
- 8 In what ways do we grieve the Spirit?
- 9 Why is He grieved?
- 10 Go over the wording in verse 31.
- 11 How are we to forgive one another?
- 12 How do we get a tender heart for others?