

Ephesians 4:17-32:

Verses 17-19:

--(17) ***This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord. . .*** or as one commentator translated it: *So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord.*

--The ***therefore*** takes us back to walking worthy of our calling and growing up in Christ as His body. When Paul, says ***and testify in the Lord*** (which he does two other times—**Acts 20:26; Gal. 5:3**), he is speaking the Lord's mind with the Lord's authority. What is his witness?

--***That you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk in the futility of their mind.*** Here we find Paul's second exhortation in relation to our walk as sons and daughters of God.

--Paul is not saying that all the unsaved are stupid but that all the thoughts and wisdom of the world only leads to vanity. *Just look at our culture!*

--Those who walk with God cannot live in the thoughts, opinions, morals, and reasonings of the unsaved world. Their godless thoughts are totally futile on the most important topics such as origin, meaning, morality, and destiny! So how can we walk with God and be swayed by thoughts that are not His?

--(18) Now Paul begins to trace how futility works out in their lives.

--First, ***having their understanding darkened.*** . . we cannot trust the world's "understanding" of God, His Word, this life, or the next. Their understanding is darkened because they do not walk in the light. Why?

--Second, ***being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them. . .***

They have no communion or experience with the life of which God is the Author. Without new birth—heavenly life—they have no capacity to experience spiritual life.

--Third, ***because of the blindness of their heart.*** . . the Greek word for ***blindness*** actually has the idea of *callouses* and was used as a metaphor for the hard hands of the hardest laborers. So hard hearts, resistant to God and the truth of God, affect minds and actions.

--(19) ***who, being past feeling.*** . . Those that are calloused in heart like the hard calloused hands of the hardest workers are resistant to feelings and convictions that would draw them closer to God.

--Instead, they ***have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*** They are past feeling godly sorrow and conviction but they still have an insatiable desire and greediness for more uncleanness.

2 Peter 2:13-15: *They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray. . .*

--Think of the insatiable lust, uncleanness, and greediness of our current porn and sex saturated culture. *Porn and sex are trillion dollar industries!*

--This was a description of Paul's world and it is a description of our world.

Verses 20-21:

--**But you.** . . remember the point. Paul is not speaking to the lost world. He is speaking to believers warning them not to walk like the futile, darkened, alienated, ignorant, calloused, unfeeling, unclean, lewd, and greedy world.

--**you have not so learned Christ.** Jesus Christ hasn't taught them to live like that. This type of behavior, and any justification for it or of it, hasn't been learned from Him!

--**Learned** insinuates a process. It isn't that we haven't ever done these things or been confused by the futile thoughts of the world in comparison with the truth of God. It is simply that as we have lived life with Christ—walked with His very Person—learned life with Him is very different than life without Him.

--**if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus.**

--The principle here is simple. If one has truly heard God, and been taught by God, the true knowledge of God will produce obedience and likeness. If you don't live it, you don't know it.

1 John 2:3-6: Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Verses 22-24:

--A son or daughter of God, not walking like the Gentiles, will both **put off . . . the old man** as well as **put on the new man**. We are called to do both, though putting on the right thing will most often help us to put off the wrong things.

--The truth Paul is explaining is an important spiritual principle. The old man will live on corrupting himself in sin and the new man will live on being renewed in the spirit of the mind and righteousness and holiness. They both have a set trajectory.

--(22) The **old man** is our unredeemed sinful nature (**Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:9**) which determined our conduct before we received the life of God. The old man is constantly corrupted by **deceitful lusts** and that is why we are called to put it off, mortify it, or crucify it. There is to be a zero tolerance policy for our old man and all his sneaky, corrupting desires.

--(23) Instead, the way we think of God and ourselves and the world we live in should **be renewed**—which is passive. We keep submitting our minds to God and the truth of God.

1 Corinthians 2:16: But we have the mind of Christ.

--Have we accepted and submitted our thoughts to the truth of the mind of Christ?

--(24) Having received new life through the Holy Spirit, now, we knowingly **put on the new man** (**Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27**), and live out the new life God has given . This is actually what we were created for!

--**which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.**

--To be made in the image of God means that we were designed to reflect Him most clearly in our moral character—**righteousness and holiness**—even more than in the visible image of our bodily forms (though no doubt God always intended harmony between body, soul, and spirit as is intimated in His greatest command). Our bodies display who we are—our character—but we share physical bodies with the beasts—not God who is Spirit. We share something more with God, something higher than just our physical bodies made from the dust. We are to share in His character.

--What does that look like practically? Well, verses **25-32**.

Verse 25:

--**Therefore**. . . takes us back to all Paul has said. These are practical examples of the corrupt life to put off and the renewed life to put on.

--We are not to lie to one another because we are a single body in Christ and we will live in truth with Christ and one another for all eternity—all lies ultimately fail.

Colossians 3:9: Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.

--The Bible tells us God cannot lie and there is no way He is asking us to do so for Him. If we live with lies, we are living the old life outside of God. We are living close to the devil who Christ says **is a liar and the father of it (Jn. 8:44)**.

Verses 26-27:

--Paul seems to be referencing a Psalm here.

Psalm 4:4: Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah.

--We do know it is possible to have anger that is not sinful because the Bible clearly states that God has anger (**Ex. 3:14; Num. 11:1**) and we are told and see that Jesus Christ was angry (**Mk. 3:5; 10:14**).

--The difference is God gets angry at the right things and then does the right things—while we get angry at the wrong things and then do wrong things.

James 1:19-20: So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

--I believe that is why Paul exhorts them not to allow the sun to go down on their anger. They should release it (**Ps. 4:4**)—or deal with the situation (**Mt. 5:23-24; 18:15-17**). *Every married couple has faced the dilemma of separation when one or the other is “sleeping on the couch.”*

--If we refuse to deal with our anger, and hold onto it internally, we give the devil space in our lives. Anger is a beachhead from which Satan can set up his operations.

Ecclesiastes 7:9: Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.

*Nee (The Breaking of the Outer Man and the Release of the Spirit): *“The most raw sentiment a man can have is temper. The Bible does not say that we cannot be angry; some forms of anger are unrelated to sin. The Bible says that we should “be angry, yet do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26). This shows that a person can become angry without sinning. Yet anger is a very raw sentiment. In fact, it is close to sinning. God’s Word never says that we should love yet not sin, because love is very far from sin. Nor does God’s Word say that we should be patient yet not sin, because patience is also far from sin. But God’s Word says, “Be angry, yet do not sin.” This shows that anger is very close to sin. Sometimes a brother commits a big mistake, and we have to rebuke him. This is a very hard thing to do. It is easy to exercise a kindness but very hard to exercise anger. Once we are careless, we will fall into a different state. It is not easy to be angry according to God.”**

--Moses, the meekest man on earth, was rightfully angry at Sinai and cast down the ten commandments but wrongfully angry at Meribah and accepted the consequences thereof.

Verse 28:

--Here the covetous and selfish person who used his hands to steal has put off that life and is now a content and giving person who uses his hands to work hard and provide for his own needs and the needs of others. *Our modern day society without penalties for thieves.*

--Paul’s personal example everywhere he went was work (**Acts 20:33-34**) and the Biblical teaching he gave in relation to work was very clear (**2 Thess. 3:7-10**). There is no Biblical entitlement to support a person who can support themselves by honest work or labor. There is Biblical command for those who cannot work and are in genuine need to receive help.

--Thievery or stealing ignores God, robs the thief of his character, robs the victim of their goods, and robs the needy person the thief should be supporting of their blessing. Stealing is an evidence of the old man.

Verse 29:

--Our mouths/tongues are spoken of so much in Scripture! *Just think of David’s emphasis on the tongue through the Psalms, despite living in a culture of brutal blood and bone warfare! Paul’s emphasis in **Romans 2** as an evidence of man’s utterly corrupt nature and Jesus’ teaching in **Mt. 12:33-37: *For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. . . for every idle word men may speak, they will give an account of it in the day of judgment.****

--First, we are to put off all **corrupt** or corrupting speech. Peter was far from Christ when we find him swearing and cursing again. *Pastors + Social media use is speech!*

--But we don’t just put off, we must also put on speech that **is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.**

--If we are being honest, I don’t think many of us actually aim for this. The Biblical command for our speech is higher than “non-meanness”. Our speech should edify and minister grace to those that hear us. *What if we were taped for the day and had listen to the replay?*

Proverbs 15:4+23: A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. . . A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in season, how good it is!

Colossians 4:6: Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

--This doesn't mean that we never say anything challenging—Paul is doing so right now—but that our speech edifies and ministers grace. *Think of how Jesus addressed individuals and crowds.*

Verse 30:

--Electricity or power cannot be grieved. A person can. The Holy Spirit is a Person. The Scriptures teach us that the Spirit can be *rebelled against (Isa. 63:10); blasphemed (Mk. 3:29); lied to (Acts 5:3); resisted (Acts 7:51); loves (Rom. 15:30); quenched (1 Thess. 5:19); yearns to jealousy (James 4:5).*

--So the Holy Spirit, who has regenerated us and given us new life, walks with us as Christ walked with His disciples and will bring us to God's appointed end in redemption as our Sealer. Am I walking in agreement with Him or trying to walk far enough at a distance people don't notice we are together?

--If it is sad for a person to be a grief to coworkers, friends, family, or parents, what of God the Holy Spirit? *What if I didn't care that I grieved my wife because she *has* to live with me? Our fellowship would be terrible!*

-The Holy Spirit is grieved when we resist His comforts, joys, guidance, power, and communion.

-The Holy Spirit is grieved because when we put on sin we put Him off—He is with us and all sin happens directly in His presence.

-The Holy Spirit is grieved because of all He has done for us and will do for us.

-The Holy Spirit is grieved because He knows that sin hurts us and others.

--And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

Verse 31:

--**Let all!** Not just some, or what we consider justified, or understandable. All of these are not of God or His Holy Spirit. They are cesspools of the old man.

--**Bitterness:** *sour spirit/corroding poison.* **Wrath:** *to burn/rage.* **Anger:** *hostility.* **Clamor:** *quarrelsome.* **Evil Speaking:** *slander.* **Malice:** *ill will.*

--Are these what we wear, or put on from day to day? You will always find some prickly people who are just plain mean because they have not put off these things.

--There is no doubt a connection between our speech, the work of the Holy Spirit, and these ungodly inward feelings.

*Bonhoeffer (Life Together): *“Where this discipline of the tongue is practiced right from the beginning, each individual will make a matchless discovery. He will be able to cease from constantly scrutinizing the other person, judging him, condemning him, putting him in his particular place where he can gain ascendancy over him and thus doing violence to him as a person. Now he can allow the brother to exist as a completely free person, as God made him to be. His view expands and, to his amazement, for the first time he sees, shining above his brethren, the richness of God’s creative glory. God did not make this person as I would have made him. He did not give him to me as a brother for me to dominate and control, but in order that I might find above him the Creator. Now the other person, in the freedom with which he was created, becomes the occasion of joy, whereas before he was only a nuisance and an affliction. God does not will that I should fashion the other person according to the image that seems good to me, that is, in my own image; rather in his very freedom from me God made this person in His image. I can never know beforehand how God’s image should appear in others. That image always manifests a completely new and unique form that comes solely from God’s free and sovereign creation. To me the sight may seem strange, even ungodly. But God creates every man in the likeness of His Son, the Crucified.”**

--How much of our speech, interactions, relationships, and lives are being determined by one of these roots of bitterness? We must put it **all** off.

Verse 32:

--First, I would just like to point out the fact that Paul assumes that we can know that we are forgiven. Our experience of forgiveness then begs the question: *How does a person who understands and experiences the forgiveness of God in their life personally react to these things in the body of Christ?*

--**Be kind to one another**—means to be *disposed to good or useful*. God is kind.

Luke 6:34-35: And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

--**Tenderhearted**—the Greek word is only used one other time in **1 Peter 3:8** and has the idea of *compassion* or *pity*. God is not hard to the plight of others enslaved by sin or corrupting themselves on the broad path to hell.

--**Forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you**. You and I have been forgiven freely, despite the gravity of our sins, the number of our sins, and the length of our sins.

Law (A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life): “That which is a reason for forgiving one offence, is the same reason for forgiving all offences.”

--In the end, all the injury we endure for Him is nothing compared to the injustice and pain and suffering He endured for us. He will have always paid a greater cost. ***1 Peter 2:18-25***