

11.10.19 ~ Ephesians 4:26-32,

Living Like God's Children, Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

Last week we studied **Ephesians 4:25**, "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one *of you* with his neighbor, for we are members of one another."

Read Ephesians 4:26-32. Paul commands us to make changes in the way we behave, especially toward one another.

Ephesians 4:26a, "*Be angry, and yet do not sin;*" You might wrongly think that because you are a Christian, if you get angry, it must be righteous anger; however, righteous anger is a response to that which brings dishonor to our Lord, but any and all anger that is motivated by attacks on us personally, is unrighteous.

Ephesians 4:26b, "*do not let the sun go down on your anger.*" Anger can quickly degenerate into bitterness, that is why Paul warns us to not let too much time pass before we deal with it. We should not go to bed angry at those we love, instead we should seek to reconcile our differences, for even the most righteously motivated anger can turn septic if it isn't dealt with properly and in a timely fashion, so as to keep it from poisoning our heart.

Ephesians 4:27, "*do not give the devil an opportunity.*" Paul warns us to deal with our anger before the day is out, so it won't fester, allowing the devil a foothold, a place of advantage from which he will seek to malign the Word of God and destroy the Work of God, using God's people to do so [Devil, from the Hebrew *diabolos* = *the diabolical one*, the accuser, the slanderer, the one who maligns; also called Satan, from the Greek *satanas* = *adversary*]. He is God's enemy, therefore he is our enemy.

We must respond to anger earnestly and expeditiously, so as not to be used by the devil to bring dissension and discord among God's people and dishonor to God. God's people are to forgive, as we have been forgiven (**Matthew 6:12**), "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

God's children are not to be grudge holders, or those seeking vengeance.

1Corinthians 13:4-7, "Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Colossians 3:12-13, "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."

James 1:19-20, "*This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."

Anger never brings beneficial results when it fails to exemplify God's compassion and character, as revealed in His Word, but it does bring consequences. We must be careful not to allow anger to simmer in our heart; for this provides the Devil an opportunity to destroy our relationships and our witness for Christ.

Satan is very deceptive and strategic, and is able to get a foothold when anger lingers or turns unrighteous. Example: God hates murder, abortion is murder; and so, Christians should be anti-abortion and pro-life.

When groups like "Right to Life" and "Operation Rescue" originally came against the so-called pro-choice proponents and the Planned Parenthood abortion clinics, they did so, I believe, out of righteous anger directed at the onslaught murder of babies in the womb.

But their anger got out of control, it became sinful and unlawful, leading to trespassing, breaking and entering, destruction of private property, assault, and even murder. Those who broke the law were jailed, some were sentenced to prison, rendering them unable to care for their own families; while also, dishonoring the God they professed to be serving.

Psalm 97:10 Hate evil, you who love the Lord, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked."

Romans 12:9, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. **19**, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord."

Yes, we are to hate evil, but ultimate judgment must belong to God. We seek God's revealed will, and respect God's sovereign timing; if not, the Devil and the world system that serves him, will use our anger against us.

Paul now commands (**Ephesians 4:28**), "He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need."

Stealing here has a broad meaning, but basically it means to take anything that we haven't been given authority, permission, or the right to have. The flesh has a built-in inclination to steal; but the indwelling Spirit of God directs us to steal no longer [Greek word for steal is *klepto*, root of kleptomaniac].

Instead of stealing, we should work with our own hands to get what we need. **2Thessalonians 3:10-11**, "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies."

1Timothy 5:8, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

We are to work at what is good [Greek, *agathos* = honest, productive, honorable], in other words, God-honoring work. We are to work in order to have what we need, but also that we might be able to share with others, and give help to those who are in need.

Acts 2:44-45, "And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need."

The "looking out for one another" attitude and practice of the NT believers is a stark reminder of how far we have fallen, and how spoiled and selfish we are in the affluent protestant church in America.

A Christian's goal to earn more should not be solely for his own personal gain. Beyond providing for our own family's needs, we should desire to help those who are less fortunate than ourselves, as Paul expressed:

Acts 20:35, "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

God provides everything we need to enjoy this life, as we serve Him. Therefore we should give freely of our wages to further the work of God, to care for those in the body of Christ who are in need, and to reach out to the poor and destitute of this world, as benefactors of God's gracious plan, purpose, and provision through Jesus Christ the Lord.

Ephesians 4:29 commands us to speak only what is good and useful to others. Unwholesome talk (often used of rotten vegetables and fruit or spoiled meat), i.e., foul language and corrupt speech should not be part of the life of a Christian. This includes profanity, dirty stories, off-colored jokes, vulgarity, i.e., all useless and offensive language, and any talk that causes injury or incites dissension.

Most of us will acknowledge the difficulty we have controlling our tongue, at times; and James describes the destructive character of this (see **James 3:1-10**).

Jesus says the tongue only speaks what is in the heart (see **Matthew 12:34; 15:10-11, 16-19**).

A foul mouth is the faucet for a dirty heart that needs to be cleansed by the Word of God. We are to put away all harmful language and learn to speak that which is pleasing to God and helpful to our brothers and sisters in the Lord. We are to speak that which will build up members of God's family and encourage all those who hear.

Our words are to be *helpful for building others up*, i.e., constructive, encouraging, instructive, uplifting, edifying, and sometimes corrective.

Whatever we say should be according to the needs of our hearers; those things that harm, discourage, or disappoint, shouldn't be said unless it is absolutely necessary to do so.

There are some things that though they may be true and wholesome are better left unsaid. Most of us appreciate the person who speaks less and has something beneficial to say when he/she does speak.

What we say should be gracious, benefiting those who listen. We are not only to speak the truth, but the truth in love (cf Ephesians 4:15). The raw truth can, at times, be inappropriate and destructive, we don't have to speak all we know in every situation, if it is not edifying.

Our conversations should be a means of conferring blessings and grace to others, not condemnations and condescensions. We were saved in grace and we are kept in grace; we then are to live and speak in grace.

It takes more effort to find something encouraging to say, then it does to say something that is condescending or cutting.

"If you can't say something nice don't say anything at all." There would be a lot more silence in our communications, if that were the standard. As Christians, we are to talk to each other graciously, generously, and respectfully.

In **Ephesians 4:30**, Paul speaks of the sorrow brought to the Holy Spirit by our unwholesome and unedifying words.

How can we do what is so displeasing to the One Who has sealed us and eternally marked us as God's own possession (**Ephesians 1:13-14**)? We are human, and even though Christians are forgiven, we still sin! Uncharitable and godless talk is sin and we must avoid doing this.

In **Ephesians 4:31** we are commanded to "put away," to get rid of, and to have nothing more to do with anything that is sinful. "All" expresses a need to get rid of any trace of these sins.

"Bitterness" is grudge-filled animosity that turns a person sour and venomous.

"Wrath" [rage] is uncontrolled frustration that leads us to act upon our bitterness.

"Anger" is emotional stewing and brewing that leads to a deep smoldering.

"Clamor" is loud cries or outbursts [i.e., brawling, loud quarreling], this is often witnessed in public outbursts, to totally lose control.

"Slander" is evil speaking [causing injury with speech], to falsely accuse or defame someone, this is driven by a bitter heart.

Paul tells us to get rid of every form of "malice" [the general term for evil] representing all that is unhelpful, unkind, self-centered and carnal; that which is contrary to the mercy, grace and love of God.

These sins break fellowship, destroy relationships, and weaken the church's testimony to the lost. When unbelievers see Christians acting this way toward one another, they have no desire to hear what we have to say about Christ; for they can't see God's love in us.

Ephesians 4:32 commands us to express sincere concern and compassion toward others; forgiving "as" God has forgiven us. We are all guilty of sin, and we have been forgiven much more than we will ever be asked to forgive someone else; we should therefore, be eager to forgive.

As a Christian, your very life belongs to Christ, and so you should speak and act in a manner that is gracious, appropriate, and edifying to your brothers and sisters in the Lord, while also being a witness to all those who do not belong to God, so that they might see Christ in you and then you can tell them about Jesus: crucified, resurrected, and coming again.

See **2Corinthians 5:14-21**. What does God's righteousness in us look like?

John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Pastor Mike
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