

# Ephesians 4 - Walking in Unity; Preserving Unity; Walking in Holiness

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Practical application now follows doctrinal instruction. Paul moves from:

- The new society (the Church) → the new standards which are expected of it
- Exposition → exhortation
- What God has done → what we must do
- Doctrine → duty

### The Joshua of the New Testament

**Position** was a key word in the first half of Ephesians—God has blessed us “with all spiritual blessings” (Eph 1:3)

***Possession** is the great word in the Book of Joshua. Joshua had to appropriate the land by taking possession of it for the enjoyment of it and for blessing in the land. Although enemies and other obstacles stood in his way, Joshua had to overcome and occupy. Joshua entered the Land of Promise on the basis of the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. It was his by right of promise, and he led the children of Israel over the Jordan into the land. Passing over Jordan is symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. We as believers have been brought into the Promised Land. That is where you and I live—at least we should be living—in resurrection territory today.*

[Alan Redpath, *Victorious Christian Living* ]

If you are not a Christian, God is not asking you to obey the commands in this epistle. First you must become a child of His through faith in Christ; you must become a member of His body. What follows in this epistle is for those who have been redeemed and have heard the Word of truth. Dead men cannot walk no matter how insistently they are urged to walk. The dead man must first be made alive. Paul has told us that we were dead in trespasses and sins. If you are not a Christian, just stay on the sidelines and listen.

### Ephesians 4

II. Walk of the believer (Eph 4:1—6:24)

(A) Walk of unity (4:1-16)

Paul covered positional unity in 2:11—3:13; now (4:1-16) he covers practical unity.

(A) Exhortation to unity (4:1-3)

(a) Exhortation to walk worthy (4:1)

**1 Therefore** I, the **prisoner** of the Lord, urge you to **walk in a manner worthy** of the **calling** with which you have been called,

**1 Therefore** I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to live in a way that is worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

- "Therefore" - refers to everything Paul said in Eph 1-3

- Introduces a huge transition in the epistle; Paul turns from talking about our spiritual riches in Christ, our wealth, our corporate and individual blessings, to how we should now act based on that identity.

- "...prisoner" - Paul can be seated in the heavenlies while seated in a Roman prison as a witness for Christ (Cf. 3:1)

- "...walk in a manner worthy" - harmonize your conduct with your calling (Phil 1:27; Col 1:10; 1 Thess 2:10)

- Paul is now urging us, in light of the mystery that he revealed in Eph 3, to walk worthy of that position

- "...calling" - our calling is unity; there is no longer a division within the body of Christ. We are unified because the middle wall of partition has been broken down (2:13-16), and Jews and Gentiles are now fellow heirs and partakers of the promise (3:6).

- Our calling is to behave in a united way, living in unity with Jewish brethren if one is a Gentile, or vice versa, in the Church

- OT: "Obey me and I will bless you"

- NT: "I have already blessed you. Now, in response to my love and grace, obey Me."

Paul now gives us 4 character traits to develop, which establish unity...

#### (b) Character traits creating unity (4:2)

2 with all **humility** and **gentleness**, with **patience**, **bearing with one another** in love,

2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,

2 demonstrating all expressions of humility, gentleness, and patience, accepting one another in love.

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

- These are the various character traits required to "diligently keep the unity" (v3); each of these reveal Christ-like character (Gal 5:22-23)

- Divisions in the church take place when individuals do not manifest all four of these traits

- A lack of each of these attributes at work in your life are characteristic of immature Christians; if there is a church or even a small group without these five traits, there is sure to be division

- As long as Christians stay in a state of immaturity, division will be the norm
- In v7-8, Paul begins to talk about spiritual gifts because it is the recognition and practice of spiritual gifts that bring the body of Christ to maturity. Then once maturity results, these attributes manifest themselves and division ceases.
- "...humility" - lowliness; a proper assessment of oneself in God's program (Cf. Phil 2:3)
- We can be prideful in our gift, and we can also be prideful to take a position or ministry that is outside of our gifting
- Humility promotes unity, pride promotes disunity
- In Greek culture, humility was thought of as a vice. It was weak and mean-spirited; it was the temper of the slave; it was inconsistent with that self-respect which every true man owed himself. The fullness of life, at that time, left no room for humility.
- Lowliness is the opposite of pride: on the other hand Christians should not promote false humility, but should recognize who they are in God's program (John 3:30; Rom 12:3). This virtue is listed first because of Paul's emphasis on unity: pride promotes disunity; humility promotes unity.
- "...gentleness" - *prautēs*, meekness; the opposite of self-assertion. A gentle person is one whose emotions are under control. Meekness is not weakness, it is a person who has their emotions under control, with nothing to prove.
- Humility has one's relationship to God and His blessings in view; gentleness has the believer's relationship with the world in view
- Meekness is a virtue of the strong, those who could exert force to get their own way but chose not to
- Meekness is the absence of the habit of asserting personal rights, either before God or man
- Moses was meek (Num 12:3), yet angry (Ex 32); Christ was meek (Matt 11:29), yet angry (Matt 21:12-13)
- Meekness is bowing yourself to the will of God
- "...patience" - *makrothumia*, means "long-tempered," the ability to endure discomfort without fighting back or becoming angry
- It is endurance under affliction; when wronged, the patient person does not retaliate (Cf. Gal 5:22; Col 1:11; 3:12; 2 Tim 4:2)
- It is a spirit which bears insult and injury without bitterness or complaint
- It is the spirit which bears the sheer foolishness of men without irritation
- It is the spirit that can suffer unpleasant people with graciousness and fools without complaint
- "...bearing with one another" - tolerance or forbearance; lovingly putting up with all that is disagreeable in other people (1 Cor 13:4)

— A fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23. Cf. Col. 1:11; 3:12-13; 2 Tim 4:2)

(c) Exhortation to unity (4:3)

3 **being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

3 Do your best to maintain the unity of the Spirit by means of the bond of peace.

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- "being diligent" - being eager to maintain, guard...like a happy marriage, you have to keep working at it

— We need to be diligent to create and foster a mindset of unity within Christ's church

— That unity, when practiced, is not automatic; there are certain steps that every believer must take to ensure that unity is being practiced in our midst (v2)

- "...keep" - it is important to understand that this unity among believers already exists; it's not something that we as believers bring into existence (Cf. 1 Cor 12:13)

— Paul is saying here that we need to "keep" or "preserve" this unity, not create it. Paul is saying because you already have this (position), now act/behave as if you do (practice).

- "...unity" - the unity between believers, which began on the Day of Pentecost through the Holy Spirit

— Unity is a major theme of the Upper Room Discourse (Cf. John 17:21-23)

- Unity is not uniformity. Unity comes from within; uniformity from without.

— Many today attempt to unite Christians in a way that is not Biblical (ecumenical religion)

— Christians are not to agree to false doctrine (Rom 16:17-20; 2 John 6-11) for the sake of perceived unity; however, doctrinal purity does not produce spiritual purity! (Rev 2:1-7)

— Paul doesn't deal with unity *until* he has laid an adequate doctrinal foundation

(B) Explanation of unity: Common doctrine (4:4-6)

(a) One body (4:4a)

(b) One Spirit (4:4b)

4 *There is* **one body** and **one Spirit**, just as you also were called in **one hope** of your calling;

4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

4 There is one body and one Spirit. Likewise, you were called to the one hope of your calling.

4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

- The church should be unified around a common doctrine or set of beliefs
- There is such a thing as false unity: false unity is unity for the sake of unity, regardless of truth. True unity never sacrifices truth for the sake of unity.
- The "ecumenical movement" is one such thing promoting false unity within and outside of the church
- The ecumenical movement is a mindset that wants to bring Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, Mormons and others under one big tent and rally together to accomplish some greater good
- This is not the type of unity that Paul is talking about in this passage. He is talking about a unity within the church that is similar to the unity displayed in Acts 2:42, which held apostolic teaching as their number one priority. It was not a unity for the sake of unity, but a unity around truth.
- In John 17:20-23 Jesus prayed that His body (the church) would be unified, just as He and the Father are unified. Three verses before this (v17), Jesus said "Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth."
- "...one body" - refers to the total number of believers from Pentecost to the Rapture. There is only one body of Christ; whether you're a believer in the USA or in Zimbabwe, you are a member of the body of Christ.
- Suggests the Church is not a machine with various independent or interchangeable parts. The Church is alive—an organism, not an organization.
- "...one Spirit" - there is one Holy Spirit, and that same Holy Spirit indwells every believer who comes to faith in Christ, from Pentecost to their death (or the Rapture) (2:22; 1 Cor 12:13)
- The Holy Spirit draws us to Christ. We come to Christ individually by grace through faith. The reason we come is that the same Holy Spirit draws all who come to Christ. The result is that at the theological level, all our conversion experiences are the same.
- The work of the Holy Spirit is to unify believers in Christ. This is the unity that the believer is instructed to "keep" (Cf. v3).
- "...one hope" - all who belong to Jesus Christ share the expectation of His return, our resurrection and Final Judgment
- This is the "Blessed Hope" (Titus 2:13). A focus on His impending return galvanizes us into proper spiritual priorities and emphasis.

(c) One Lord (4:5a)

(d) One faith (4:5b)

(e) One baptism (4:5c)

5 **oneLord, onefaitth, onebaptism,**

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

- "one Lord" - refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, Head of the Church

- His lordship over believers brings into existence the unity of the Church

- Two believers, claiming the same Lord, should be walking in unity. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ has the same Lord.

- "...one faith" - there is only one way of salvation, that through grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone

- In Ephesians, faith is the content of the gospel. Faith is not a human creation: the foundation of our faith is Jesus Christ. Christians may disagree over certain "debatable" matters, but if we affirm the same indisputable foundation, we are one in Jesus Christ.

- The early Christians recognized a body of basic doctrine that they taught, guarded, and committed to others. When this is denied, there are divisions.

- There must be substance to form an adhesion of believers. This substance is correct doctrine.

- "...one baptism" - the baptism that unites all believers in the body of Christ is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Water baptism through immersion symbolizes the invisible Spirit baptism, which happens at the point of faith.

- Both kinds of baptism, Spirit and water baptism, were probably in Paul's mind.

- See [Holy Spirit](#) for a complete explanation of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor 12:13: For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

(f) One God (4:6a)

(g) One Father (4:6b)

6 **one God and Father of all** who is over **all** and through **all** and in **all**.

6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in all.

6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

- "one God and Father of all" - refers to God's fatherhood of all believers

- The "Lord's Prayer" opens with "*Our Father*," not "*My Father*"

- Since there is only one Father, He is not the Father of unbelievers. Sonship can come only through Christ.

- "all" [4x] - all believers

(C) The reason for unity: gifts (4:7-12)

In v2, Paul gave a list of five traits that, if practiced, would unify a body of believers and prevent division. He also said that immaturity breeds division in the church. Beginning in

v7, he now talks about spiritual gifts, which are Spirit-empowered abilities for service, as a counter to the immature believers who do not practice the list of traits listed in v2. Paul's prescription for these immature believers is to exercise their spiritual gifts, because when their gifts are recognized and practiced, it will result in spiritual growth and maturity.

- Spiritual gifts are the tools that the Holy Spirit uses to bring Christians into a state of maturity

(a) Reality of giftedness (4:7)

7 But to **each one** of us **grace** was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

7 Now to each one of us grace has been given proportionate to the measure of the Messiah's gift.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

- In v2, Paul gave a list of five traits that, if practiced, would unify a body of believers and prevent divisions. He also said that immaturity breeds division in the church.

— The list of traits are not common in immature believers, so Paul raises the topic of spiritual gifts in this passage because the gifts, when recognized and practiced, will result in spiritual growth and maturity

— Spiritual gifts are the tools that the Holy Spirit uses to bring Christians into a state of maturity

— A spiritual gift is a Spirit-empowered ability for service

- "...each one" - God gives every believer at least one spiritual gift at the point of faith ("each" is also used in 1 Cor 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10)

— This means that ministry is not limited to the pastor and the worship band...every believer is called into the ministry in order to use their Spirit-empowered abilities for service to bless others

- "...grace" - in this context, refers to the specially provided ability to serve God

— Each believer has received grace from God (3:2); God does not give each Christian the same "measure" of grace (v11; Rom 12:4-6; 1 Cor 12:4-6)

— In the spiritual realm, each believer has at least one spiritual gift

— There are three primary lists of spiritual gifts in the NT (1 Cor 12:4-11,27-31; Rom 12:3-8; Eph 4:11)

— Each list is different, and probably only a representative list of the full list of gifts the Holy Spirit provides

— Spiritual gifts are not toys to play with; they are tools to build with

— Giving spiritual gifts to the believers is one of the works of Christ during His Present Session. See [Present Ministry of Christ](#) for details on what Jesus is doing from heaven



today.

(b) Reason for gifts (4:8-10)

8 Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE *THE* CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO PEOPLE."

8 Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men."

8 That is why God says, "When he went up to the highest place, he led captives into captivity and gave gifts to people."

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

- "...HE ASCENDED ON HIGH" - Jesus' ascension back to heaven. When Jesus ascended, He did two things:

1. "...LED CAPTIVE *THE* CAPTIVES" - this is a remarkable quote from Ps 68:18, applying to Jesus a victory song written by David
  - This refers to Jesus, at His ascension, when He led the OT saints out of "Paradise" and into heaven. Today when a believer dies, they do not go to "Paradise" but go straight into heaven (Cf. 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23).
2. "...GIFTS TO PEOPLE" - Paul uses an illustration from Ps 68:18 in which the triumphant warrior is elevated when he returns with hosts of prisoners receiving gifts from the conquered people and distributing gifts to his followers [Ryrie]
  - When He ascended back to heaven, He began to distribute gifts
  - Like a victorious military leader would obtain spoil from the enemy and distribute them according to his will, this is just what Jesus did
  - This is further evidence that the Church couldn't have existed before the ascension of Jesus because spiritual gifts were not given until after the ascension, and spiritual gifts are essential to the operation of the church
  - In Rom 12 and 1 Cor 12, Paul spoke of gifts given to people, but here he speaks of (spiritually) gifted people given to the Church as gifts. The gifts of "gifted people" are described in v12.

9 (Now this *expression*, "He ascended," what does it mean except that **He also had descended** into the **lower parts of the earth**?

9 (Now this *expression*, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?

9 Now what does this "he went up" mean except that he also had gone down into the lower parts of the earth?

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

- Paul now comments on the meaning of "ascended" and "gave" in the preceding OT quote

— For Christ to ascend to heaven, He first had to descend to "the lower parts of the earth"

- "...lower parts of the earth" - refers to the earth itself, not a place inside, within, or about the earth

— It's a genitive of apposition rather than a genitive of possession (Jesus' tomb) or a genitive of comparison (Hades). A good example of a genitive of apposition is "the city of Phoenix" as "city" and "Phoenix" are one and the same. In this verse, "lower parts" and "earth" refer to the same thing, the earth.

— Jesus' descent from heaven occurred at the Incarnation, when He came to the earth and was born a human. It refers to Jesus' first advent, not a descent into hell between His death and resurrection (for a passage about that, see 1 Peter 3:19-20).

10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

10 The one who went down is the same one who went up above all the heavens so that all things would be fulfilled.

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

- Irregardless of the interpretation of v8-10, the point of the passage is this: Christ secured a victory, which included His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to sit at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

— Part of that victory secured the procurement of spiritual gifts, which Christ bestows upon His church

Some use v8-9 to prove that Jesus descended into hell between His death and His resurrection. While this event did take place, that is not what is described in this passage. Adding to the confusion on Eph 4:9-10 is the fact that it is referred to in the Apostle's Creed: "...[Jesus] was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven...." It is evident from Scripture that Jesus indeed did "proclaim" victory to the spirits in hell (the angels

incarcerated for the atrocities of Gen 6), but not from this passage. The proof for that event is found in 1 Peter 3:19-20.

(c) Enumeration of gifts (4:11)

11 And He gave some *as*apostles, some *as*prophets, some *as*evangelists, some *as*pastors and teachers,

11 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

11 And it is he who gifted some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, and still others to be pastors and teachers,

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

- This verse explains the gifts that Christ gave to people in v8; it begins a sentence that runs through v16 in Greek

— After Jesus ascended, He “gave” as Victor over death, gifts to the Church that enabled it to function according to His design

— This order of events is in harmony with the revelation that the Church is a new entity that came into existence after Jesus’ ascension (Pentecost, Acts 2)

— Christ gave gifted people (apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers) to the Church as gifts to the Church

- “...apostles” - *apostolos*, one sent with a commission. A disciple is a follower or learner; an apostle is a divinely appointed representative.

— Technically speaking, the office of Apostle must have been a personal witnesses to the resurrection (Acts 1:15-22; 1 Cor 9:1-2). These included: Paul (1 Cor 9:1); Barnabas (Acts 14:14); James (Jesus half-brother) (1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19).

— Eph 2:20 says that the church was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The Church was built on the 1st century giftings of those with the gift of apostle and prophet. These men laid the foundation of the church; once that foundation was laid, these gifts (in the technical sense) were no longer needed.

— Twelve men plus Paul were the official apostles, who had seen the risen Christ and had received personal appointment from Him (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor 15:8-9; Gal 1:1; 2:6-9)

— However, there were other men who, while not apostles in this technical sense, functioned as apostles. The NT writers called them “apostles” too (1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; Acts 14:4,14; 1 Cor 9:6; Rom 16:7; Cf. 1 Thess 1:1; 2:7; 1 Cor 4:6,9).

— The duty of the apostles was to establish the doctrinal foundation of the church (2:20; 3:5)

— It is probably according to their spiritual gifts, rather than their offices, that Paul was thinking of these individuals

- "...prophets" - *prophetes*, one who speaks forth; not necessarily predictive; a forth-teller of the Word of God (Acts 11:28; 1 Cor 13:2; Eph 3:5)
  - Purpose: edification, encouragement, and comfort to the Church (1 Cor 14:3)
  - Some of them (pre-completed canon) conveyed new authoritative revelation to the Church (2:20; 3:5; Acts 11:28; 21:10-11). Much of this is revelation we have in the NT.
  - Most prophets, however, simply "spoke forth" truth that God had previously revealed in His Word (Cf. Acts 13:1; 1 Cor 11:5; 14:26-33)
  - *Christians today do not get their spiritual knowledge immediately from the Holy Spirit, but immediately through the Spirit teaching the Word.* [Wiersbe]
- "...evangelists" - the ability to share the good news of Jesus Christ with unbelievers
  - This gift was given to the apostle Peter, among others. It brings outsiders into the body of Christ; it grows the body of Christ in number.
  - Some use the lack of this gift as their rationale for not evangelizing others. However, Paul teaches otherwise in 2 Tim 4:5. Timothy did not have the gift of evangelism, but he had the gift of teaching, and Paul told him to "do the work of an evangelist." While Timothy could not "be" an evangelist, because he didn't have the gift, he could "do the work" of an evangelist (as does every believer).
  - Paul did not mention these people as foundational to the Church as he did the apostles and prophets (2:20). Nevertheless, their ministry was/is essential.
  - They equipped people to minister (v12-13) by leading them to faith in Christ
  - This gift is similar in some ways to the gift of pastor-teacher...a pastor-teacher is like a pediatrician, helping believers grow healthy and to maturity; the evangelist is like an obstetrician, helping the unsaved become born again.
- "...pastors and teachers" - since the word "some" is not repeated, it suggests that we have one office—"pastor-teachers"—with two ministries; the Greek construction (Granville Sharp Rule) also suggests one kind rather than two kinds of people. It is a singular gift given to the body by Christ.
  - Granville Sharp Rule: when you have two Greek nouns joined by the conjunction "and" and the definite article ("the") is before the first noun but not the second noun, the two nouns are equal (Cf. Titus 2:13). This is Greek grammar 101.
  - The Holy Spirit gives this gift to certain people and they are responsible for communicating the teachings of the Word of God to other believers.
  - Paul is speaking of a unique calling that combines both the gift of pastor and the gift of teacher into the same person. You can be a pastor without being a teacher (Rom 12:7); you can also be a teacher without being a pastor (1 Peter 5:2).
  - This person's work is to teach the Word of God so that the hearers may be adequately equipped for any good work; to build up the saints for their work of service.

If this equipping of the saints for works of service (good works) is not happening in your "church," you may not have a church.

— Pastoring involves shepherding, guiding the flock, leading the flock, and feeding the flock

— It probably describes the overseers of local churches who both pastor and teach (Cf. 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9; 1 Peter 5:1-3). Mentioned also in Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28-29; 1 Tim 3:2.

— As a believer, how do I know what my "works of service" are as I'm being built up?

This is largely determined by what your spiritual gift(s) are.

- Interestingly, the Greek word for "pastor" here (*poimēn*) is used 18x in the NT, but only once is it translated "pastor." 15x it's translated "shepherd" and twice it refers to Jesus as a "Shepherd" (Heb 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25).

— In the rest of the NT the verb form of "pastor" (in the context of the church) is always used to describe a function performed by elders (plural), who also are to function as teachers. The term "pastor" is never used, in either noun or verb form, to refer to a separate, independent office within the church. It is simply a term applied to one of several functions assigned to elders who serve each local church.

— This raises the legitimate question of why do churches in the US today have "head pastors" when that model is neither commanded or given as an example anywhere in the NT? Rather, "pastor" (verb form) is one of several functions that elders perform rather than a separate office, title, or position that is apart from or over a functional eldership.

— There is not a single person in the NT called a "pastor" except for Jesus and the Head of the church. But this one use of the noun *poimēn*, without any other supporting scripture or command, has borne a pastor-centric model of churches that seems foreign in the NT.

— In fact, the pastor-centric model of most churches is contrary to the numerous NT commands for how we are to actually be the church and how elders are to function among us.

### **Three Purposes of the Church**

- Glorify God
- Edify the saints (Eph 4:11)
- Preach the gospel (Matt 28:18-20)

In 1 Cor 12:8-28 the Holy Spirit is seen as enduing the members of the body of Christ with spiritual gifts, or Spirit-powered enablements for service; here certain Spirit-endued men, i.e. apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are themselves

the gifts whom the glorified Christ bestows upon His body, the church. In 1 Corinthians, the gifts are spiritual enablements for specific service; in Ephesians, the gifts are people who have such enablements.

These gifts of gifted people are to be used to equip, build up and mature believers within the Church. In-depth preaching and teaching with this goal in mind is very much the minority in our churches today. Too often, pastors look to apply every passage to us with practical application, or they seek to find church salvation in every passage and under every biblical rock. The writer of Hebrews experienced much the same frustration (Heb 5:12-14).

Additional resources on spiritual gifts:

[Spiritual Gifts, 18 Observations on](#)

[Spiritual Gifts, What are the?](#)

[Spiritual Gifts - General Notes](#)

[Spiritual Gifts, How Do We Discover Our?](#)

#### (d) Purpose of gifts (4:12-16)

12 for the **equipping** of the saints for the **work of ministry**, for the building up of the body of Christ;

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

12 to equip the saints, to do the work of ministry, and to build up the body of the Messiah

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

- "...equipping" - *katartismos*, preparing, mending or restoring people to their proper use (Gal 6:1; Cf. Matt 4:21; 2 Cor 13:11; Heb 13:21)

— The primary gift given to build up and equip the body of Christ is pastor-teacher

— Many pastors operate as CEOs, as someone who marries and buries someone, as an evangelist, as a project manager for church programming, or as a counselor. And some pastors can fill all or some of those roles, but the primary role and job description of a pastor is *to equip the saints for the work of ministry* (every believer is in the ministry), in order to build up (grow numerically and mature spiritually) the body of Christ.

- Timothy, who would eventually become pastor of the church at Ephesus, was given clear instructions by Paul on how to equip the saints to build up the church (1 Tim 3:16-17)

— Paul told Timothy that the Scripture has a supernatural quality to it that allows us to be equipped. As we come under the influence of Scripture, we become equipped for life.

— So the primary task of the one with the gift of pastor-teacher is to bring the body of Christ into a greater state of maturity through consistently and diligently teaching God's Word

- "...work of ministry" - the pastor-teacher's (pediatrician) primary function is to equip the saints for the work of service. The role of these leaders is to minister the Word to the saints in the Church, so that the saints can minister the Word to the world (1 Tim 3:15).

— A pastor is not paid to actually do the work, he is called to "equip *the saints* unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ" (literal translation)

— The greatest tragedy of our churches today is the Biblical illiteracy in the pews

— Would you get into an airplane if the pilot didn't know more about flying than the average church member knows about the Word of God? Well-fed sheep multiply.

In the pastoral epistle of 2 Timothy, there are 27 explicit commands given to the church. In 27 words, Paul tells pastors what their focus should be. You would have to be blind to not understand the thrust of Paul's commands because a total 18 of those 27 commands, fully two-thirds, have to do with the ministry of the Word.

Since the primary task of the pastor-teacher is to bring the body of Christ to maturity by the teaching of the Bible, what does maturity look like? Paul describes this in v13-16...

13 until we all **attain to the unity of the faith**, and of the **knowledge of the Son of God**, to a mature man, to **the measure of the stature** which belongs to the **fullness of Christ**.

13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

13 until all of us are united in the faith and in the full knowledge of God's Son, and until we attain mature adulthood and the full standard of development in the Messiah.

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

- Since the primary task of the pastor-teacher is to bring the body of Christ to maturity by the teaching of the Bible, what does maturity look like? Paul describes this in v13-16...

- "...attain to the unity of the faith" - in v2 Paul explained that immature Christians cause disunity/division; now he comes full circle and says that mature Christians bring unity

— Therefore to have unity in the body of Christ you must have maturity, consequently God has given the gift of pastor-teacher to the body of Christ to do that very thing: to bring the saints into maturity, because as they grow and mature, there is less backstabbing and division because we are all replicating Christlike character.

- "...knowledge of the Son of God" - maturity = unity, and it also = knowledge

- Not just facts about the Bible or academic information, but we should be applying it to our lives
- Knowledge is the first step, but at some point knowledge must become wisdom (knowledge applied to life). Knowledge must come first because we cannot apply what we don't know. But at some point knowledge can't just remain as bits of information in our minds...it has to be applied in our day-to-day life (wisdom).
- This is how we become a "mature man"
- "...the measure of the stature" - measures of maturity:
  - Christlikeness (v13)
  - Stability (v14)
  - Truth joined with love (v15)
  - Cooperation (v16)
- As each believer exercises the gifts and abilities God has given them, three things happen:
  1. The body enjoys unity (v3-6)
  2. The body becomes more spiritually mature (v15)
  3. The body becomes more Christlike (1:23; 3:19)
- "...fullness of Christ" - unity of the faith (v5), full knowledge (1:17) and maturity (v13) constitute the three-fold goal, which equals the "fullness of Christ"

God is not trying to produce successful Christian business people who can impress the world with their money and influence. He is not trying to fashion successful church leaders who can influence people with their organizational and administrative skills. Nor is He trying to fashion great orators who can move people with persuasive words. He wants to reproduce in His followers the character of His Son—His love, His kindness, His compassion, His holiness, His humility, His unselfishness, His servant attitude, His willingness to suffer wrongfully, His ability to forgive, and so much more that characterized His life on earth.

**14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of people, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;**

14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;



14 Then we will no longer be little children, tossed like waves and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, or by clever strategies that would lead us astray.

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

- This verse (in contrast to v13,15-16, which tell us what spiritual maturity looks like), tells us what immaturity looks like. There is no better description of 21st century Christianity in the United States than this verse.

- Immaturity is likened to a child who is tossed around by waves

- "As a result" - God expects the gifts given to believers to grow individual believers, as well as the Church as a whole, into mature believers. When the Church is taught the Word of God, they are inoculated against false teaching.

- "...children" - immature believers

- "...carried about by every wind of doctrine" - the passing fads that sweep through the body of Christ: Prayer of Jabez, The Shack, Promise Keepers, Social Gospel, etc.

- Immature believers get caught up in these passing fads, which sweep through the church all the time. Mature believers, in contrast, stay close to the Word of God while these fads come and go.

- Just as a child just learning to walk will put everything they see into their mouth, whether it's good for them or bad they don't know, such is the immature believer

- The latest fad or false doctrine comes along, the immature believer immediately puts it into their mouth, like a child, not knowing if it's good or bad

- As the child grows up, when they're 16, if they still crawl around putting everything in their mouth, you would have a big problem on your hands. They learn as they grow what is good for them and bad for them, and they begin to not put things that are bad for them into their mouths.

- This is what a mature Christian is like...they don't absorb everything they hear into their minds. They develop a screening device that tells them that certain things are not good for them, and they reject those things. And they identify things that are good for them, and they accept those things.

- Paul uses two interesting Greek words in this verse, which perfectly describe the history of amillennialism:

- "...trickery" - *kubia*, cunning; denotes "dice playing"; can be rendered "sleight of hand"

- "...scheming" - *methodia*, "deceitful wiles"; literally means "the process of systematizing error"

- One result of gifted people equipping saints to serve the Lord and others is that believers will become stable in their faith, not as children who are easily swayed and

confused

— False teachers create such “winds” (of doctrinal confusion) by their teaching, and seek to trick people into following them or their false doctrines

15 but **speaking the truth in love**, we are to **grow up in all *aspects*** into Him who is the head, *that is*, Christ,

15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,

15 Instead, by speaking the truth in love, we will grow up completely and become one with the head, that is, one with the Messiah,

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

- Paul now gets back to what maturity looks like...

- "...speaking the truth in love" - a sign of maturity: when we can speak truth in love. No one has an issue speaking the truth, but to do so in love is much more difficult.

— A mature Christian is someone who has a handle on truth, and presents it in such a way that it does not batter or denigrate other people

— It's easy to speak the truth if you don't care about love, and it's easy to speak love if you don't care about truth. It's much more difficult to speak the truth in love.

— Truth without love is brutality; love without truth is hypocrisy

— Truth unites; lies divide. Love unites; selfishness divides.

— The church that stresses both “truth” and “love” will produce spiritually mature, Christlike believers

— Loving, effective confrontation requires “speaking the truth in love.” The truth may be as medicine to the person who needs it, but love is the sugar that, added to the medicine, makes it palatable.

- "...grow up in all *aspects*" - we don't allow children in the natural world to not grow up; likewise, we should not allow Christians to not grow up to maturity in Christ

16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of **each individual part**, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

16 in whom the whole body is united and held together by every ligament with which it is supplied. As each individual part does its job, the body builds itself up in love.

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

- "...each individual part" - in v7 Paul told us that each believer is given at least one spiritual gift

— The body of Christ grows as each person becomes a steward of the gift(s) we have received. As we faithfully employ these gifts, the body of Christ grows and matures.

— Our bodies only work correctly when all parts of it are working together, doing what they were made to do

— The "whole body" grows as each individual part carries out its proper function

— Every believer, no matter how insignificant he may appear, has a ministry to other believers

— An isolated Christian cannot minister to others; neither can others minister to him. This is the importance of regular, consistent fellowship.

## (2) Walk of holiness (4:17-32)

### (A) Do not imitate the pagan (4:17-21)

#### (a) Exhortation not to imitate the pagan (4:17a)

#### (b) Description of the pagan (4:17b-19)

17 So I say this, and affirm in the Lord, that you are to **no longer walk just as the Gentiles also walk**, in the **futility of their minds**,

17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,

17 Therefore, I tell you and insist on in the Lord not to live any longer like the gentiles live, thinking worthless thoughts.

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

- Paul now moves from talking about a walk of unity (v1-16), including a discussion on spiritual gifts (which bring believers to maturity and unity), to now talking about our walk of holiness

- Once we're saved, positionally every believer is holy, every believer has been imputed with the righteousness of Christ, and therefore when God the Father looks at us, all He sees is the righteousness of Christ (1:4; Cf. Phil 3:9)

— This is even after we fought with our spouse this morning, or after inappropriate vocabulary came out of our mouth when someone cut us off on the road

— But now that we're in the practical section of the book, Paul is no longer talking about our positional holiness, but our practical holiness in our daily life. Paul is urging us to act in a way that allows our practice to catch up with our position.

- "...no longer walk just as the Gentiles also walk" - Paul's command: do not imitate (act like) unbelievers

— It goes on in v18-21 to give us three reasons why we are to not imitate (act like) unbelievers...

1. unbelievers have futile minds (v17)
2. they are given over to sinful desires (v19)
3. they are going in the opposite direction of Jesus Christ (v20-21)

- "...futility of their minds" - unbelievers typically do not have a worthy aim or goal in life

— The mind of the unbeliever is alienated from God; they are in a state of darkness, blindness, ignorance. So why would we imitate unbelievers?

— Paul emphasizes the intellectual factor in everyone's way of life. Scripture testifies to the power of ignorance and error to corrupt, and the power of truth to liberate, ennoble and refine. [Stott]

If believers must persevere in walking with Christ until death in order to be saved (as Calvinism/Reformed Theology teaches), why does Paul tell us here to not live like unbelievers live? Notice that Paul never says if you live like an unbeliever, you were never saved to begin with or you have lost your salvation.

18 being **darkened in their understanding**, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the **hardness of their heart**;

18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart.

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

- Read the verse backward: Hardness of heart causes one to be excluded from life of God because of ignorance, which causes them to be darkened in their understanding

- "...darkened in their understanding" - Paul traced the attitude of unbelievers to its source: lack of worthy purpose is the result of unclear understanding

— This, in turn, results from separation (alienation) "from the life of God"; separation is the result of a natural "ignorance" of God (Cf. 1 Peter 1:14). This, in turn, rests on insensitivity (hardness of heart) to God and His ways.

— If the mind of unbelievers is futile, and they are ignorant, in darkness, and blind, why on earth would you want to act like them? In Matt 15:14, Jesus said that if a person who is blind leads another who is blind, both will fall into a pit.

- "...hardness of their heart" - hardness of heart; dulled, as by an anesthetic
- Sin has a hardening, deadening, blinding effect upon people. An unsaved person's thinking is "vanity" (futile).
- He does not know God, he cannot understand the world around him, and he cannot understand himself
- Our world has much knowledge but very little wisdom

19 and they, having become callous, have **given themselves up to indecent behavior** for the practice of every kind of impurity with **greediness**.

19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

19 Since they have lost all sense of shame, they have abandoned themselves to sensuality and practice every kind of sexual perversion without restraint.

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

- "...given themselves up" - God often will give us what we want...He gives them over to pursue what they want. He says, "I'm going to remove my protection from you so you can go off and pursue what you so desperately desire."

— In Rom 1, Paul talks about how God has "given them (unbelievers) over" to their sinful lusts. He abandons them in their sin and gives them over to themselves. Given this reality, how foolish is it for us to act like an unbeliever.

— As a result of the condition described in the preceding verses, unsaved Gentiles "give themselves over" to sensuality, to live lives of sensual self-indulgence

- "...indecent behavior" - *aselgeia*, lasciviousness; contains the idea of wanton violence
- "...greediness" - *pleonexia*, refers to an increasing desire for more

#### (c) Exhortation to follow the teaching of Christ (4:20-21)

20 But you did not **learn** Christ in this way,

20 But you did not learn Christ in this way,

20 However, that is not the way you came to know the Messiah.

**20** But ye have not so learned Christ;

- "...learn" - Christians did not "learn" to follow Christ by the natural mental processes that typically have led to the degradation of the unsaved Gentiles. They didn't learn Christ in such a way as to feel free to walk like unsaved pagans. They learned to follow Him as His disciples from the gospel.

— Note the emphasis on thinking (v17,23); understanding (v18); ignorance (v18); "learned the Messiah" (v20)

— Note: it doesn't say "learn *about* Christ," it says "learn Christ." It is possible to learn *about* Him and never be saved!

21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,

21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,

21 Surely you have listened to him and have been taught by him, since truth is in Jesus.

21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

- Unbelievers have one value system and believers are to have a completely different value system

— This is why it's impossible to live the Christian life with one foot in the world and one foot in Christ. The value systems are polar opposites, so it's impossible to live for both at the same time.

— Consequently, you can follow the Lord and be judged by the world, or you can follow the world and be judged by God

— His first point is that unbelievers are moving in the opposite direction of Christ

— In contrast to unsaved Gentiles, Christians' minds are no longer dark, they are no longer alien from God, and their hearts are no longer hard and impure

— Believers have one value system, unbelievers have a completely different value system (James 4:4)

- The Ephesian believers had received teaching about Christ, and had learned to live in the sphere of His will

— The better I understand the Word of God, the better I know the Son of God, for the entire Bible is a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ

— You will never see a mature Christian who isn't a lover of the Word of God

John 14:6: Jesus \*said to him, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.*"

John 17:17: *Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.*

Practical Holiness - don't live like unbelievers because:

- their minds are futile (v17)
- their understanding is darkened
- they are excluded from the life of God because of ignorance
- their hearts are hardened
- they are callous
- they are given over to indecent behavior (v19)
- they are going in the opposite direction of Christ (v20-21)

...but we did not learn Christ in this way.

(B) Put off the old man and put on the new (4:22-24)

22 that, in reference to your former way of life, you are to **ridyourselves** of the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the **lusts of deceit**,

22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,

22 Regarding your former way of life, you were taught to strip off your old nature, which is being ruined by its deceptive desires,

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

- Verses 22-24 are a summary of Rom 5-8. Paul also dealt with this in Eph 2:4-6 and Col 3.

- The interesting thing about life after you become a Christian is that the person you were before, your sin nature, does not go away. We just receive a new nature (2 Cor 5:17) at the point of faith, but the old/sin nature does not go away.

— We are constantly under the temptation to go back to the sin nature, but Paul says here that we are to "rid ourselves" of our sin nature ("make no provision for the flesh," Rom 13:14)

— Then what's the difference between us and our sin nature after we're saved, if the sin nature isn't replaced? The difference is that after you're saved, the power of the sin nature is broken. It no longer has power and reign over your life.

— Before you came to Christ, you were nothing but a slave to your sin nature. I had no choice but to obey my sin nature, because it was the only option I had. After you came to Christ, you were "baptized" (identified) into Christ's death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ.

— Consequently, the power of the sin nature is broken. I now have the power, as a Christian, to say no to the sin nature. It does not mean that the sin nature takes a vacation for awhile or withers up and dies...the Bible makes it clear that we will be battling against our sin nature until our very last breath.

- "...rid yourselves" - now that you are in Christ and the power of the sin nature is broken, you must learn to tell the sin nature No. It is not automatic...I must make a moment-by-moment conscious decision not to yield to my sin nature.

— When a believer fails to tell the sin nature No, and goes back to (indulges) the sin nature, they are not displaying practical holiness, they are regressing back to their old nature, and they are no different than unbelievers.

- "...lusts of deceit" - the interesting thing about sin is that it is fun, it always markets itself as better than the alternative

- The problem is that when we go down that road we discover there is a certain amount of pleasure with sin, but the pleasure is short-lived. Often the consequences for our sin often overshadow any momentary pleasure we get from the sin itself.
- The deception comes in that the consequences of sin are hidden, which is why the lust of sin is deceitful. Sin is not upfront with its consequences...the consequences are always hidden, unknown, but always much more far-reaching than we expect.

23 and that you are to **berenewed in the spirit of your minds**,

23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

23 to be renewed in your mental attitude,

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

- "...be renewed in the spirit of your minds" - the battleground for putting off the sin nature is our minds

— In order to "rid" (put off) the old man (v22), I need my mind to be renewed...the battleground is always in our minds (2 Cor 4:4)

— This is not an imperative or command; it's an infinitive in Greek, a description of what has already happened in the life of every believer (Cf. Col 3:9-10)

— This renewing is an ongoing process in the life of a Christian (progressive sanctification)

— The verb "be renewed" is passive, which emphasizes that God is at work in us (Cf. Rom 12:2)

— "put on the mind of Christ" - you can't change your actions until you change your way of thinking

— This is how Satan works...if he can get control of our minds, our decision making, even just a small portion or sliver of our mind, he can control what we're thinking and deciding

— If Satan can get us to think his way in even one particular area of our life, he can control the outcome of our lives, he can neutralize the Christian from achieving their divine purpose

— There is only one way to renew our minds...through a consistent intake of God's Word. You cannot expect your mind to be renewed if you are not consistently taking in the Word of God.

— "I was born this way" or "I guess I'm just a hopeless case" are lies we tell ourselves... we must stop using excuses for our sinful habits and lifestyle and claim the truth of being a new creation in Christ.

— We must study Scripture to know what God is truly like and correct our misunderstandings about His character and plan



— By knowing and applying His Word, our mind is altered by His Spirit, our thinking changes, and our lives will be characterized by “true righteousness and holiness”

24 and to put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

24 and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

24 and to clothe yourselves with the new nature, which was created according to God’s image in righteousness and true holiness.

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

- As we learn to reckon the old nature dead and put on the new nature, we discover that we can imitate any of God's attributes in the moral realm. As God is patient, we become patient; as God is holy, we learn that we become holy.

— We “put on the new man” as we pursue the things of Christ rather than the desires of the flesh

- “Righteousness” and “holiness” mark our new life rather than sensuality, impurity and greed (v18-19). In addition, it is a life based on “truth” instead of ignorance (v18).

Verses 22-24 - we must “rid ourselves” of our corrupted sin nature...now that we are in Christ and the power of the sin nature over us is broken, we have the ability to tell the sin nature, NO!

- When a believer indulges their sin nature, but choice, they are no different than unbelievers

In order to “rid ourselves” of our sin nature, we need to renew our minds through a consistent intake of God's Word. This is a ongoing process in the life of a believer (progressive sanctification).

- The battleground for control of our lives is always in our minds
- We can't change our actions or words until we change our minds
- Satan works to get a sliver of control of our minds; once he does that, he can control what we think and choose in an area of our life
- If Satan can get us to think his way in even one small area of our life, he can control the outcome and neutralize a believer from achieving their divine purpose.

So what are some ways we can live out this command to put off the old nature and put on the new nature? Paul will now give us five real-life points of application (v25-32):

1. Speak truth rather than lies (v25)
2. Righteous anger rather than sinful anger (v26-27)
3. Working and giving instead of stealing (v28)
4. Edifying speech rather than corrupt speech (v29-30)
5. Forgiveness rather than bitterness (v31-32)

(C) Contrasts explaining how to put off the old man and embrace the new (4:25-32)

(a) Truth rather than lies (4:25)

**25 Therefore**, ridding yourselves of **falsehood**, **SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE OF YOU** WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, because we are parts of one another.

**25** Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one *of you* with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

**25** Therefore, stripping off falsehood, "let each of us speak the truth to his neighbor," for we belong to one another.

**25** Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

- As the practice of the old man follows his condition (v17-19), so the practice of the new man (v25-32) should follow his condition (v20-24)

- "Therefore" - Paul was never content to explain a principle and then leave it

— He always applied it to different areas of life that need its power. Paul now names five specific sins to be avoided, each one has three parts: a negative command, a positive command, and the reason for the positive command.

- "...falsehood" - *pseudos*, lying; a contrary-to-fact statement with the intent to deceive  
 — Deception is a mask that false teachers (v14) and the "old man" (v22) wear. Instead, the Christian should speak truth, namely what is in harmony with reality (Cf. Col 3:8-9; Zech 8:16).

— Truthful speech is essential to unity in the body; it is obviously essential for other reasons as well

— Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44), and he wants us to believe that God is a liar (Gen 3:1)

— The 9th commandment: Thou shalt not bear false witness (Ex 20:16)

— God cannot lie (Num 23:19; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18) therefore we should not lie if we are going to be Christlike

— We can lie in many ways...telling someone you're busy when you're not, telling someone you're sick/not feeling well when you're not

— Falsehood builds barriers between believers

- The first sin judged in the early church was the sin of lying (Acts 5:1-11)
  - David said, "I said in my haste, All men are liars" (Ps 116:11)
  - No believer can be neutral in the battle of truth: "We are members of one another."
- The Christian is called to be honest, even in the little things. We should never deceive a fellow believer. We are called to loyalty. We must never be unfaithful to a member of the body. We are to be fiduciaries.
- "...TRUTH" - speech that is in correlation with reality

**Negative Command:** "rid yourself of falsehood"; do not lie

**Positive Command:** speak truth

**Reason:** because truth promotes unity within the body of Christ

(b) Righteous anger rather than sin (4:26-27)

26 BE ANGRY, AND *YET* DO NOT SIN; do not let the **sun go down** on your anger,

26 Be angry, and *yet* do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

26 "Be angry, yet do not sin." Do not let the sun set while you are still angry,

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

- The second exhortation is to avoid sinning when you're angry, and to deal with sin quickly if it does accompany anger

- If you can be angry but not sin, some anger must be acceptable. So what type of anger is acceptable?

- Acceptable anger is anything that impedes God's glory. In Mark 3:5 when Jesus saw the empty legalism and utter hypocrisy of the Pharisees, He became angry (only place in NT where Jesus was explicitly angry).
- Twice Jesus turned over tables in the temple courtyard in response to what the religious leaders were doing in the temple (God's house) courtyard. They had taken something holy and turned it into something profane.
- There are times when it would be very wrong *not* to be angry. We should be angry at nothing but sin.

- What is sinful anger?

- Any anger that does not originate from a challenge to God's glory
- Any anger due to some type of personal wrong. It's an anger that wants some type of revenge or a score to be settled. "Don't get mad, get even" is a good example of sinful anger

- Anger is an emotional arousal caused by something that displeases us

- It is difficult to practice a truly holy anger or righteous indignation because our emotions are tainted by sin. The moment self comes in, anger becomes sinful.

- Prov 15:1: A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.
- *Anger is momentary insanity.* — Horace
- Employing practical righteousness in our lives means that we are not pursuing personal vendettas against others
- "...sun go down" - we should deal with anger by first confessing it (1 John 1:9); if apologies to others is necessary, we should offer them quickly
- Letting the sun go down on one's wrath is a figure of speech that emphasizes the need to deal with sin soon, *pronto*, without delay (Cf. Deut 24:13-15)

*Anyone can become angry, but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—this is not easy.* —Aristotle

27 and do not give **thede**vil an **o**ppportunity.

27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.

27 and do not give the Devil an opportunity to work.

27 Neither give place to the devil.

- "...the devil" - anger cherished becomes malice; Satan works through a malicious spirit. Malice is anger that smolders.

— This same anger can suddenly burst forth, which we call wrath

— Satan cannot possess a believer, but he can certainly influence a believer in their thinking and actions

— Harboring bitterness or anger in our heart gives Satan a foothold in our minds that he can use to influence our thinking and our actions

— James 3:6 says that our tongue is a world of iniquity, and is "set among our body's parts as that which defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell."

— How do we get rid of anger? Cf. v32

- "...opportunity" - room for action

— The reason why it is important to deal with anger quickly (v26) is that if we do not, Satan will have "an opportunity" to lead us into further sin

— When a Christian harbors bitterness or anger in their heart, it gives Satan a foothold in their mind that he can use to influence their thinking and actions...this is why we need to consistently renew our minds

— Satan can use unbelievers any time he wants...he is living rent free in their hearts and minds. But what he really loves to do is use Christians who are easily irritated, frustrated, angry and bitter, to do his work.

— Satan loves to use the tongue of a believer as a tool; don't be a tool (of Satan)

— James 3:6 says that our tongue is a world of iniquity, and is "set among our body's parts as that which defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell."

— Unrighteous anger breeds additional sins...it's a slippery slope of sin

**Negative Command:** avoid sinning when you're angry

**Positive Command:** deal with sin quickly if it does accompany anger

**Reason:** so that I don't give the devil a foothold/opportunity

(c) Work rather than stealing (4:28a)

(d) Giving rather than stealing (4:28b)

28 The one who **steals** must no longer steal; but rather **he must labor**, producing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with the one who has need.

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.

28 The thief must no longer steal but must work hard and do what is good with his own hands, so that he might earn something to give to the needy.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

- The third exhortation is to refrain from stealing and to instead work, so we will have something to share with the needy

— Paul does not mention the other benefits of work, such as providing for one's own needs and doing something useful

— The time, talents, and treasure God has given to me...I should not use them to connive, scheme and steal, but rather should use them to work and become a productive member of society

— He's actually arguing for believers to work hard and gain wealth...why? Not so you could be rich, but so you can be generous to those in need; so you can give more of what you've earned to those in need.

— Why should a Christian become rich? So I can have 4 cars instead of just 2? So I can have two houses instead of just one? So I can move up the economic ladder? No...so I can be more charitable. Paul tells us to become wealthy so that God can use your wealth to bless and help others.

- "...steals" - *klepton*, covers all forms of misappropriation: money, time, resources, etc.

— Satan is also a thief (John 10:10). He coaxed Eve to take the fruit that was forbidden.

A lazy Christian robs himself, others, and God.

— The First Adam was a thief and cast out of Paradise. The Last Adam turned to a thief and said, "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

— God instituted private property as one of the Ten Commandments. Socialism is social plunder and a denial of private property rights. Delinquent payables are also a form of stealing.

- "...he must labor" - the men whom God called in the Scriptures were busy working: Moses was caring for sheep; Gideon was threshing wheat; David was tending his father's sheep; the first four disciples were casting or mending nets; Paul was a tentmaker; Jesus was a carpenter.

**Negative Command:** do not steal

**Positive Command:** instead of stealing, labor with your hands

**Reason:** so you can share something with those in need

### Radical Positive Obedience

In this verse, Paul gives us the principle of radical positive obedience. Some people have described this as "putting off and putting on." In v28, when Paul talks about stealing, he does not stop with the negative command, "Cease stealing." Rather, he tells us that in order to cease stealing, we should use our time working with our hands. Yet even this is not sufficient. The thief is to stop stealing, and to work in order to have something to give. So the negative behavior is stealing, the "neutral" behavior is working with one's hands, and the positive behavior is giving away one's belongings to others.

We see Paul use this same principle in relation to speech in v29. It is not sufficient to stop lying, or even to be silent, but one must speak the truth with the goal of building someone up. Likewise, we are not to be drunk, but we are to be filled with the spirit so that we can sing songs and spiritual songs under His control to the edification of Christ's body (Eph. 5:18-19).

(e) Edifying speech rather than corrupt communication (4:29-30)

29 Let no **unwholesome word** come out of your mouth, but if *there is* any good *word* for edification according to the need *of the moment*, *say that*, so that it will **give grace** to those who hear.

29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

29 Let no filthy talk be heard from your mouths, but only what is good for building up people and meeting the need of the moment. This way you will administer grace to

those who hear you.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

- "...unwholesome word" - often limited to profanity, but there are many things that come out of our mouths that are destructive: gossip, jokes that lower others, laughing at the expense of others, general derogatory remarks, complaining, accusing others, berating others, a sharp tone, digging up the past, etc.

— Anything that injures others or causes dissension in the body is "unwholesome" (*sapros*, rotten, defiling)

— When believers accuse fellow believers of certain things, they are acting as Satan because he is the accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10)

— When we use our mouths not for the edification of other Christians, but to run down other Christians, we are doing the devil's work

— We expect a change in speech when a person becomes a Christian. Trace the word "mouth" in the book of Romans (Rom 3:14 vs. 10:9-10; 3:19 vs. 15:6, etc.).

— Living a life of practical holiness involves controlling this 2x2 mass of mucus membrane between my gums called the "tongue"

— Practical holiness means not lending my tongue to everything that it naturally wants to do

— Instead of words of destruction, speaking words of encouragement

— Christians should use words to build people up ("for edification"), not tear them down

— If we have a tongue problem, we have a heart problem. Our tongue is a window into our soul. Matt 12:34b: **For the mouth speaks from that which fills the heart.**

- "...give grace" - provide help or gratification in the sense that the edifying words communicate encouragement and direction, and thus enable the hearer to do right (Col 4:6)

30 Do not **grieve** the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were **sealed for the day of redemption**.

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

30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit, by whom you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.

30 And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

- "...grieve" - an emotion of sorrow, sadness, to bring pain

— The Holy Spirit is a Person...He has feelings, emotions. We can grieve the Holy Spirit by our speech.

- In the context here, we grieve the Holy Spirit when we gossip or denigrate other believers, when unwholesome speech leaves our mouths
- When we use our mouths not for an instrument of edification, but to bring others down, we bring grief and sadness to the heart of God Himself
- This is a sin that only believers can commit. When a believer commits a sin in his body, he sins against the indwelling Spirit who has sealed him to “the day of redemption,” and so the Spirit is grieved.
- If the believer is grieving the Spirit, he is not being filled by the Spirit. Living a defeated life means grieving the Spirit. Living an undefeated life is the means by which a believer does not grieve the Spirit. This becomes a condition of being filled by the Spirit.
- We grieve the Holy Spirit when there is sin in our lives. The answer to grieving is repentance and confession (1 John 1:8-10).
- “Quenching” the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 5:19) is to ignore His teaching and influence in our lives, or His promptings in our heart when He attempts to lead us
- This is perhaps the most important part of this section: The Holy Spirit loves you. You can’t grieve someone who doesn’t care...
- No one can unseal the work of the Holy Spirit, which continues to the day of redemption (Rom 8:22-23)
- "...sealed for the day of redemption" - the Holy Spirit will indwell believers forever (John 14:16)
- Since believers are the temple (dwelling place) of the Holy Spirit, any sin I commit I'm involving God Himself in it. You can't turn off the Holy Spirit or have Him step outside for a few minutes while you sin.
- This was Paul's point in 1 Cor 6 when believers were going into the temple and having sex with the temple prostitutes, and Paul tells them that when they indulge in this sin, the Holy Spirit is involved in it as well
- An uncontrolled tongue grieves/saddens God
- If we have a tongue problem, we have a heart problem. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Your tongue is a window into your soul. If hatred comes out of my mouth, I have hatred in my heart. Whatever comes up in the bucket was down in the well. If destructive words come out of my mouth, destructive thinking is in my heart.
- On the other hand, if love comes out of my mouth, love fills my heart. If mercy and compassion comes out of my mouth, there is mercy and compassion in my heart. If joy comes out of my mouth, there is joy in my heart. To fix the mouth problem, you have to first fix the heart problem.

**Negative Command:** don't speak unwholesome words



**Positive Command:** speak edifying words instead

**Reason:** so that those who hear will receive grace, and so you don't grieve the Holy Spirit and break fellowship with God

### **Tongue Problem = Heart Problem**

If we have a tongue problem, typically that means we have a heart problem: out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks (Matt 12:34b, KJV). What comes up in the bucket was down in the well. What comes out of our mouth is a window to what is deep in our hearts...if hatred is coming out of my mouth, there is hatred in my heart. If destructive words are coming out of my mouth, destructive beliefs are in my heart. On the other hand, if love comes out of my heart, there is love in my heart. Our words are simply a natural reflection of what is in our heart.

*Grieving the Holy Spirit amounts to rejecting a priceless gift from God. [Chafer]*

(f) Forgiveness instead of bitterness (4:31-32)

31 All **bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander must be removed from you**, along with all **malice**.

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

31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, quarreling, and slander be put away from you, along with all hatred.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evilspeaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

- Paul is talking about an exchange...exchange bitterness in your heart for forgiveness. The traits Paul lists here are all behaviors or attitudes of your old nature, which you need to reckon as dead, then exchange them for...(v32)

— Many people are angry because they have been wronged, cheated, taken advantage of. Maybe something your parents did to you, maybe a coworker, a relative, a friend, a spouse or former spouse, maybe it was even a fellow believer or even a pastor.

— No one gets through this life unscathed...it's all part of living in a fallen world. We've all been injured in some sense and we have a tendency to hold on to those things because we want justice. The more we cling to the idea of justice, the more angry we become when justice never arrives. The angrier we get, the more corrupt speech comes out of our mouth.

- The fifth exhortation is to get rid of six vices and adopt three virtues. These are all sins that grieve the Holy Spirit:

- "...bitterness" - leads to wrath; it hardens the heart. Bitterness is a settled hostility that poisons the whole inner man.
- The basic cause of bitterness is an unforgiving spirit. Learning how to forgive and forget is one of the secrets of a happy Christian life (Cf. Ps 133:1).
- "...wrath" - *thymos*, rage; flows from bitterness and refers to outbursts of uncontrolled passionate frustration
- "...anger" - inappropriate noisy assertiveness and abuse; the anger described here comes from malice, it does not describe (righteous) anger at sin
- "...clamor" - brawling; shouting
- "...slander" - words that hurt, demean, or defame another person
- "...must be removed from you" - aorist imperative, requiring a one-time, once-and-for-all decisive act
- "...malice" - bad feelings toward another person or group of people; it is the source of the other five vices; malice can be described as "congealed hatred"

**32 Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.**

32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

32 And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another just as God has forgiven you in the Messiah.

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

- "...kind" - saying or doing what is fitting to a need, with a sweet and generous attitude
- "...compassionate" - tender-hearted; evident when we feel affection for someone
- "...forgiving each other" - a reflexive form; letting offenses and grievances go, freely and graciously

— Putting the most charitable construction on apparent faults or faux pas

— Forgiving rather than magnifying the faults of others. Remember, we have been forgiven of much more than we're being asked to forgive.

— The reason Christians should be forgiving, which underlies all the commands in this verse, is that God has forgiven us freely in Jesus Christ (Cf. Col 2:13-14)

- "...just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" - when I'm treated poorly or talked about behind my back negatively, I want justice to be carried out. But I have to remember that when Christ forgave me, He did not require justice from me. He treated me not just with mercy, but also with grace.

— So how wrong and inconsistent is it that I, as a Christian, who has received an unconditional pardon of my sins (past, present, and future), would turn around and treat

a fellow believer with justice? I don't want God to treat me with justice...I just want His grace and mercy, yet how is it fair for me, after receiving His grace and mercy, to require justice from others?

— I must replicate Jesus' treatment of me with grace, mercy, and forgiveness to other believers. God commands believers to forgive according to what we have *received*, not according to what the other person *deserves*.

— In Matt 18:21-35 Jesus told a parable of the unforgiving servant...a man owed an impossible amount to the king, and the king forgave his debt. However the servant then went out and put a chokehold on someone who owed him a small amount of money and threw him in prison. When the king learned of the servant's treatment of his debtor of a small amount, compared to the king's treatment of the servant (forgiving a huge amount), the king turned the servant over to the torturers.

— The "torturers" in this context could refer to divine discipline and/or possibly a loss of reward

— In Luke 7:36-50, Jesus was eating dinner with a Pharisee and a woman (called a sinner, likely a prostitute) came in uninvited and began anointing Jesus feet with perfume, using her tears to wash His feet and wiping His feet with her hair and kissing His feet. The Pharisee thought, If Jesus was a prophet, He would know what sort of woman it was who was anointing and washing His feet. Jesus responded to the Pharisee's thoughts by telling him a story of a lender who forgave two borrowers, one for 500 talents and one for 50 talents. Who would love the lender more? The Pharisee answered the one who owed 500 talents, which Jesus said was the correct answer. Jesus went on to tell the Pharisee (Simon) that he had done nothing for Him since He arrived at his home, but this woman had not stopped weeping and cleaning His feet, anointing them with perfume and kissing them since He arrived. Jesus forgave her sins, which were many, "because she loved much."

— The more our mind understands the idea of how much we're loved, how much we have been blessed, and are aware of the unconditional blessings that have been transferred to our account, the more we have a potential/capability to forgive others (Cf. John 13:1-17, esp notes on v15)

— When we consider how much we have been forgiven by God, we have the capacity to forgive others unconditionally who have wounded me. When we live with that perspective, our bitterness, our resentment, and our anger begin to disappear. Maybe not completely this side of eternity, but the influence that angry thoughts have over our lives dissipates.

**Negative Command:** remove bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander and malice

**Positive Command:** be kind and compassionate, and forgive each other

**Reason:** because God has forgiven me for much more than I must forgive others

Demonstrating an attitude of constant forgiveness will greatly enrich a marriage. It enables a spouse to develop transparency and oneness with their mate. To resolve conflict, there must be a willingness to forgive. We need to seek forgiveness when we wrong our mate, and to communicate understanding to that person. Try restating or verbalizing to your mate how they feel, and then ask for forgiveness. Say, "I was wrong; I'm sorry; will you forgive me?" It is important to be specific in this process.

Justified hurts are the most dangerous; they are the hardest to let go.

**Matthew West - Lyrics to "Forgiveness"** It's the hardest thing to give away And the last thing on your mind today It always goes to those who don't deserve It's the opposite of how you feel When the pain they cause is just too real Takes everything you have to say the word Forgiveness

It flies in the face of all your pride It moves away the mad inside It's always anger's own worst enemy Even when then jury and the judge Say you've got a right to hold a grudge It's the whisper in your ear saying set it free Forgiveness

It'll clear the bitterness away It can even set a prisoner free There is no end to what its power can do So let it go and be amazed by what you see through eyes of grace The prisoner that it really frees is you

Show me how to love the unlovable Show me how to reach the unreachable Help me now to do the impossible Forgiveness

I want finally set it free Show me how to see what your mercy sees Help me now to give what You gave to me Forgiveness