

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Principles of New Life

Scripture: Ephesians 4:25-32

Code: 1930

Ephesians, chapter 4, verses 25 to 32 – this is a very practical section. This is one of those sections that you really don't need me for. You can just allow the Spirit of God to convict you as you read it, and it says much in and of itself. But I'll do my best to guide a little bit of your thinking, to help you to see the impact in its fullness. Ephesians 4, and verse 25 – and for our visitors, we might say that we're continuing in a study of Ephesians, week by week, month by month, moving through the book and having a tremendous time.

Verse 25 says: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down on your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. 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. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Obviously, you can sense that this is a tremendously practical passage. Let me back up to some of the things we said last Sunday morning, and see if I can't help to draw you from that text to this one. If you remember last time, we looked at the Sermon on the Mount. We looked at Matthew 5 to 7, and we said that Jesus is saying there that people who are a part of His Kingdom will be different than the rest of the world. They will think differently, they will talk differently, they will act differently. They will have different motives, they will worship differently. In other words, true children of the Kingdom are very easily distinguished from the world – at least in the pattern of distinction that is outlined in the Sermon on the Mount.

There is to be a difference. We're not to be like the world. When God recreates a person in Jesus Christ, there's something new, there's something different. That new creation is, indeed, a new creation. We saw that the Lord was talking, in Matthew 5 to 7, to a group of people who believed that they were the citizens of the kingdom. They believed that. They believed that they were the ones who were in on God's economy. That they were the recipients of God's blessing. They were professors, however, and not possessors. They had covered up their sinful heart with a religious cloak. They had masked with pseudo-spirituality the real carnality that was characteristic of their nature. They were

religious, they were not regenerated.

And so our Lord says, “Except your righteousness exceed that kind of righteousness, you won’t even be a part of My Kingdom.” And we saw that our Lord was calling for a standard of righteousness as the very moniker of a Christian, as the very definition of a Christian. Not the false, phony, superficial religious covering of those of His day. And so our Lord was saying, “It’s not the ones who say, Lord, Lord, it’s not the ones who claim to be in the Kingdom, but it’s the ones who prove it by their living; by the fact that they are distinct, and they are different, and they are unique.” And we told you that if you are not living that way, if your life is not distinctly different from the world, there is a real possibility that you are not a Christian at all, no matter what you claim, no matter what you imagine, no matter how religious you are.

Unless there is a distinction in your living, there is a good possibility that there is no distinction in your nature, either. Now, Paul is reinforcing basically the same truth in Ephesians. Paul is saying, in chapters 1 to 3, “Look, this is who you are,” 4 to 6, “this is how you act.” And you can never separate the two. There is always the standard in terms of position, and then there always is the activity in terms of behavior, and they go together. You cannot say, “Well, I am a Christian, because once I received Christ.” That’s non-Pauline, that’s non-Petrine, that’s non-Johannine, that’s non-Sermon on the Mount thinking. Peter, John, Paul, Christ, are all saying the same thing. If you are a believer, this is how it is manifest.

Peter says it in 2 Peter, chapter 1. He says you have received the new nature. You have received a nature that is beyond corruption. You have received great and precious promises; you have been made a partaker of the divine nature. Now, the only way that will ever be verified, the only way that calling and election can ever be made sure, is when you add to that, virtue. And when you add virtue to that, you begin to see the reality of that. He talks about virtue, and he talks about kindness, and he talks about love, and all of those characteristics of a new creature. In other words, what Peter is saying is this: you will have the knowledge of your salvation, the assurance of your salvation, not by remembering a past event, but by seeing a present virtue.

That’s basic. John says the same thing in 1 John. You can know that you’re a Christian by the thing that’s going on in your life now. And this is true. You know, even people who are Christians, when they get living in a sinful situation for any length of time, one of the first things they lose is a sense of security. And they begin to doubt whether they’re really saved, because that comes from the witness of a life, and a confirmation of the Holy Spirit within us. So if you’re not living a different life, there’s a real possibility you’re not a different person. New creatures act like new creatures. But watch this – even though this is an absolute, and even though God says, “This is how it is,” there is still the cooperating element of my will.

And even though the Lord is saying if you are a believer, this is how you will live, that doesn't mean it's against my will. That's the beauty of the paradox of the Christian life. If somebody says to me, "Who lives the Christian life, you or the Lord?" I have to say, "Well, it's the Lord; 'not I, but Christ liveth in me,' and yet on the other hand, it's me," because unless I beat my body to bring it into subjection, unless I respond to the commands, unless I say 'yes' and yield to the Spirit of God moment by moment, it's not going to happen. So it's God's sovereignty 100 percent, and yet it's my response to that in terms of my own will. And there's that same paradox. And that's exactly what Paul is saying here. If you are a new creature, chapters 1 to 3, you will live like it, chapters 4 to 6.

But you became a new creature on the sovereignty of God and your own will, chapters 1 to 3. And you will live it out based on God's sovereignty; you are a new creature, and on your will, you respond to that – so both are there. Now, that's very simple - we could go into deeper detail, but that's sufficient for the moment. And so you find in the Bible – now watch this – that frequently there will be statements, "This is how a Christian lives," and then sometimes the same principle will be put in a command, "This is how you are to live." This is what God will do in your life if you're a believer. But this is what you must do. You see, you are not a robot; you are involved, in a paradoxical way, in the explosion of divine energy in your life that makes you what you are to be.

And so sometimes it's a statement, and sometimes it's a command. And here the apostle Paul sets it forth in terms of commands. He says, "Since you are a new creation, and since new creations are different, here's how you are to be different. Here's how you are to be distinct. Here's how your life is to be set apart from the other lives." And, beloved, it goes without saying that the church better be different, or we don't have anything to say, right? Now, keep in mind that, in verses 17 to 24, the apostle Paul gave a general statement. And his general statement is simply this: Christians are to be different. You're to be different. You don't walk as the Gentiles or the heathen walk, verse 17.

You don't walk in the blindness, and the darkness, and the hardness of heart, and the insensitivity, and the lasciviousness, and the uncleanness, and the greediness. You're different – you're different. You didn't so learn Christ. You put off, verse 22, the old man. Verse 23, you put on the new man. That's general. You're putting on a new lifestyle. You're putting on a new walk, a new pattern of living. So he gave that generality, based on who you are, in chapters 1 to 3. Chapters 4 to 6 tell you how to live. You put off the old, you put on the new. Well, somebody might say, "Well, what do you mean, John, specifically?" Well, he gets very specific in verse 25.

And from now on the very end of the chapter, it's a matter - the end of the book, rather – it's a matter of very specific things. This is where you need to activate your will. This is where you need to say "yes." This is where you need to flip the switch that turns it on. The general statement, verses 17 to 24, and now the specifics, right, beginning in verse 25. And the first thing he does is this: he makes specific the general fact of changing from an old lifestyle to a new one. And he gives you five categories in which the change takes place – five areas of illustration. Number one: you exchange

lying for speaking truth. You exchange lying for speaking truth, verse 25.

“Wherefore” – in other words, since it is generally true that the old is gone and the new is come, wherefore, specifically, “put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.” Now, remember this. In Revelation, chapter 21, and verse 8, we read this: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.” Now, one thing for sure, liars go to hell. That’s what it says. Conversely, it is true people going to heaven are not – what – liars. That is not characteristic of a believer.

Oh, there may be those times when we sin and we fail, but there’s no way that you can look at your life and see a constant flow of lies and get any biblical basis for believing you’re a Christian, because hell is for liars. And by the way, in John 8:44, it says; “Ye are of your father, the devil, and the devil is the father of all” – what – “lies.” So if you are a liar by character, if your life is a constant lying situation, if you can’t deal rightly with the truth, you give indication of having the devil as your source, and hell as your destiny, and no matter what you claim, and no matter how religious you get, and no matter how you go to church, you’re not going to be a part of God’s Kingdom, because liars don’t go to heaven.

People who go to heaven aren’t liars. So he says your will has to get involved – “put away lying. Speak every man truth with his neighbor.” By the way, that’s a quote from Zechariah 8:16 – gives us a little insight into how Paul dealt with the Old Testament – he quotes the Old Testament. One of the chief characteristics of our human lifestyle today is lying. Do you realize that we have an entire world system based on lying? Can you imagine what would ever happen if, for one day, everybody in the world told the truth? We’d have World War III. If the truth ever came out about anything, if everybody all of a sudden decided to operate on truth, our entire system would collapse. We’re to put away lying, we’re to be different in that sense.

The world - they’re not different. Lying is everything to them. The whole thing is lawyers lie, doctors lie, teachers lie, preachers lie – some preachers lie. Salesmen lie, secretaries lie, bosses lie, advertisers lie, politicians lie, government lies, everybody lies, and it’s what keeps the thing going. Nobody has to tell the truth. It doesn’t work that way. That’s not how the game is played. It’s all built on lies. And if everybody had to tell the truth, the whole system would come down in a big collapse. You do what’s expedient, and lying is expedient. It’s incredible. People lie about the little things and the big things. It’s just an entire way of life. It is the outworking of a depraved nature.

It lies because it is of its father, the devil, who is the father of lies, who has developed a system of lies. The whole religious system, apart from the truth of Christianity, is a pile of lies. Lies, lies, and more lies. Satan lies about life, he lies about death, he lies about God, he lies about Christ, he lies about the Spirit, he lies about the Bible, he lies about Heaven, he lies about hell, he lies about good,

he lies about bad. Everything, the whole thing is based on lies. And when he develops a religious system, he throws a little tiny truth in it, so you think it might be okay. It's like the clock that doesn't work; it's right twice a day, and that's about it.

And the whole system we live in, in terms of economics, is based on lies. Our government lies to us all the time. We only hear what they want us to hear. That's just the way it is in our world. And you go in to buy something, and you get a whole song and dance, you know it isn't true, but you stand there, and you have no choice. And they sell you stuff on television, and if it ever fulfilled those expectations, it would be priceless. And all of a sudden God comes into your life, and the Bible says God is true and every man a liar. Christ comes into your life, and He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The Holy Spirit takes up residence in your life, and He's called the Spirit of truth, who will lead you into all truth. And the Word of God is called the truth. John 17: "Thy word is truth."

And all of a sudden, when you become a believer, you stepped out of a domain of lies into an element of truth. You know the true God, redeemed by the true Messiah, indwelt by the true Spirit, possessing the true word, and living it out in a true kind of life. And when a believer opens his mouth, according to Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 15, he should be speaking the truth. We believe in truth. And that means lying has to go. I mean all kinds of lying. You say, "What do you mean by lying?" Well, one kind of lying is telling what ain't so. That's just the plain old kind of lie. But there are a lot of others. Shading the truth, exaggeration – oh, exaggeration is a real problem.

I forget who it was was telling me the other day that a guy used to go around and give his testimony. And he said everywhere he went he gave his testimony. He'd speak and give his fantastic testimony. He did it everywhere he went. And so he was invited to speak somewhere and the guy said to him, "Are you going to give your testimony?" He said, "No, I don't give my testimony anymore; I never give my testimony." He says, "What do you mean?" He said, "Listen," he said, "I gave my testimony for so many years, and I kept adding to it, I forgot the truth." Do you know about that? Lying, cheating in your school, looking on someone else's paper, or getting some exam before you're supposed to have it.

Cheating in your business, cheating in your work, cheating in your taxes, failure to keep your promises, even to God – that's lying – betrayal of a confidence – you said you wouldn't say it, but you did; flattering somebody – that's lying, because you're telling them a bunch of stuff that isn't even true about them so they'll think you're wonderful and give you something. Excuses. You know what? I'll tell you, an honorable man is a man that says, "Yes, I did that, and I was wrong." Most people say, "Well, you don't understand. You see" – and then you get this long song and dance, while you get a bunch of excuses about a certain thing. I think there are a lot of forms of lying. I think sitting in silence when the truth should be spoken is lying.

There's no place for this in the Christian life; it goes all the way back to Exodus 20; "Don't bear false witness." Tell the truth. Tell the truth. God's economy is based on truth, it's got to be. And you see, I'm not talking about some sort of psychological honesty, I'm not talking about sensitivity training, you know. "Well, the best thing for you is to tell the truth." I remember I got into a group like that one time, and I don't know how I ever got in it. I was sitting in it, and everybody was supposed to tell about the other person, what they didn't like. Somebody says, "I just want you to know that you make me sick. I hate you. It's your ears, and the way you talk. There's something about you I hate."

And you know, the whole idea was, "Now see, don't you feel better?" Listen – listen – you don't need to deal with honesty on that situation; you need to go back and ask God to take care of the hate in your heart. You've got another problem; you're in the wrong verse. You've got to get to the next verse, verse 26. You don't have any reason for that. We're not talking about some pseudo-honesty that has psychological implications. God isn't dealing with that. That isn't the point. If you don't love somebody, it isn't the kind of honesty that says, "Tell them you hate them." If you don't love them, you'd better go back and ask God to help you with love, because you're to love people.

You're to put off any kind of lying in any relationship, but that is not a license for you to expose your hate. That's another problem. Now you say, "Well, what's the basis of this; why is it so important to tell the truth?" Well, look at verse 25: "For we are members one of another." And we're talking about a body in Ephesians, people; we're talking about the unity of the church. And if we don't tell the truth with each other, we're going to mess up the fellowship. I'll give you an illustration. What would happen if your brain started to lie to you? I'll give you one illustration. What if it switched the signals on hot and cold? Just thought, "Well, I'm going to lie a little bit here; I'll just switch the hot and cold."

You know what would happen the next time you took a shower? You'd fry yourself. Next time you're trying to get your coffee hot enough, if it was reversed, it would just keep getting – it'd just get hotter, and hotter, and hotter, only it would be coming through as cold. That would be the end of you – just that little thing. Let me ask you this: what would happen if your eye decided to deceive you a little bit, next time you got in your car and took a trip? And your eye said, "I think I'll just - I'll shade the truth a little bit. There's not really a curve in the road. Or there's no double-trailer semi passing on the hill. Good-bye." You are absolutely dependent on the honesty of your nervous system; you're dependent upon the honesty of every organ in your body, or you'll be dead.

And God has even built into you a pain system; the basis of your health is a pain system that's honest enough to tell you when you have a problem, or a system of revealing diseases; that's what symptoms are. God's given us a whole area of symptoms, so that we know when we've got a problem that has to be dealt with, and that's the honesty of the body that allows it to function. Now, the body of Christ can't be any less than that. We can't go shading the truth with each other, or we can't ever function properly. How can we minister to each other, and bear each other's burdens, and care for each other, and love each other, and lift each other, and teach each other, and pray for each

other, if we don't really know what's going on?

Be honest, speak the truth. You exchanged lying for speaking the truth when you became a new creation. That's one of the old things you put away. The word put away, *apotithemi*, means to throw off like an old coat. It's used in Acts to talk about when they threw their coats at Paul's feet; get rid of it. Second, you exchange unrighteous anger for righteous anger. "Be ye angry and sin not." There are three Greek words for anger: *thumos*, *parorgismos*, and *org*. *Thumos* has to do with a boiling fury, you know, where you blow a gasket; it literally comes from "to go up in smoke." You just completely lose it. *Parorgismos* is that inside, seething, fuming resentment, that comes out of jealousy, and anger, and envy, and it just sort of seethes, until you become an ugly, moody person with a root of bitterness.

And *org* is a kind of anger, basically – and there is an overlap in these terms, but just giving you shades of meanings – *org* is a kind of word that has to do with a kind of a settled conviction kind of anger. In other words, you have certain priorities in your life, you have certain things you're committed to, and when something violates that, there's a natural response. For example, if you determine with all your heart to love a child that's in your family, and you give yourself to that child, you'll hate the one who would come along and hurt that child. It's that kind of settled commitment. And these words can be good or bad. You can be angry and sin, or be angry and sin not.

But the whole crux of the matter is your motive, isn't it? By the way, *thumos*, it doesn't seem to be a word that's tolerated for a Christian. The blowing up kind of a thing is not something that's allowable for those of us who name the name of Christ. *Thumos* is used to speak of unregenerate man; it's used to speak of a man functioning in a sinful way. It's used to speak of Satan in Revelation 12:12, and it's used to speak of God in Romans 2:8, and God literally blows His cork in final judgment. That is used to speak of God's ultimate wrath. Now, only God can literally go to the ultimate end of anger – *thumos* would be the extreme anger – only God can go to the extreme end of anger and still be righteous, because everything in God's mind is absolutely under control, even His ultimate anger, you see.

But you and I can't. We can't handle *thumos* – we get out of control. But sometimes *parorgismos*, that inner resentment, and sometimes *org* that settled conviction, is tolerable; and it is tolerable when it is anger for other than selfish reasons. We can be angry over that which grieves God. We can be angry over that which hinders and hurts His cause. After all, the Lord was angry. I see the majestic indignation of Jesus as He cleanses the temple; I see that. That, to me, is – that's where Jesus just really lashed out. Boy, it was an anger that got out, it came out – maybe it's *org* there. It's the idea that He just - He had this conviction that God's holiness was what was at stake, and, boy, when He saw the unrighteousness there, He moved against it.

I see Him also in John, chapter 11, and there it says that Jesus wept, but before it says that, it says He was troubled in His spirit. And I think it was like *parorgismos*. I think it was hatred against the consequence of sin as He saw a dead Lazarus, a direct illustration and symbol of the power of sin, and it brought to His mind the terrible things He would endure on the cross as He bore sin in His own body, and He was angry about sin, He was mad about sin. He had a right to be wrathful. But for the Christian, there is this injunction: don't be angry so that it comes to sin. Don't be angry for your own causes. Don't get angry when people offend you. Don't let your anger degenerate into some kind of personal resentment, personal bitterness, personal sullenness, personal moodiness.

That thing is forbidden. That is forbidden. If you have any justifiable anger, it is that anger which is designed to defend the great, glorious, holy nature of God. It is the anger of Jesus as He weeps in a troubled spirit at the grave of Lazarus. It is the anger of Jesus as He makes a whip and cleans out the temple. It is the wrath of God. It is the righteous fury of God in Deuteronomy and Numbers in the Old Testament. But the wrong kind of anger, according to Matthew 5, is the first step toward murder, and that's wrong. Sometimes maybe we have to have anger, sometimes I get angry. First Timothy, chapter 1, apparently he got a little bit upset at some guys named Hymenaeus and Alexander, and grabbed them by the ear, as it were, and threw them out of the church.

You have a right to be angry about some things. Psalm 77:10 says, "Ye that love the Lord hate evil." And Psalm 69:9, David says, "Zeal for Thine house has eaten me up; The reproaches that are falling on Thee are falling on me." He's saying, "God, I can't tolerate what people do to Your name. It infuriates me." Now, I admit I get angry sometimes. I hope I never get angry about what happens to John MacArthur; I hope I always get angry about what happens to God's holy name. And I hope I never stop getting angry about that. We should have a basic, built-in *org* - that is, a programmed anger over sin, a programmed anger over evil, that puts us in a beatitude mentality, so that whenever I see sin, be it in you or be it in me, I mourn in my spirit.

That kind of anger is the sinew of the soul. The anger that is selfish, passionate, undisciplined, uncontrolled, is sinful, useless, hurtful. It must be banished from the Christian life. But the disciplined anger that seeks the rightful place of a righteous God is pure, and selfless, and dynamic. Some of us aren't angry and we ought to be. We ought to be angry about a lot of stuff going on in the world. We ought to be angry about some stuff going on in the church, but not let it degenerate into a wrong kind of anger. So he says, "Be angry, but sin not." Don't go to bed, don't let the sun go down on your wrath; don't be a resentful, angry person. Deal with it.

And I think that second part of the verse has reference to the wrong kind of anger. The point being if you do have the wrong kind of anger, if you've got anger that is sin, then deal with it now, don't sleep on it. Don't go to bed with it. Face it and deal with it. And you know, all through the New Testament, we're told that when we face sin, we are to deal with it now, we are to repent, confess, and turn from it. And by the way, that kind of stuff, that kind of unconfessed anger, anger that isn't really dealt with,

is really a bad thing. When you have that angry, unforgiving spirit, 2 Corinthians 2:11 says, "Satan will get an advantage of you." You should never have any kind of anger in that manner. You want to know why?

Here's the key to the whole thing – listen – you know why you get angry? You get angry because people do things to you you don't like. The fact of the matter is you don't deserve anything anyway, right? That's the whole point. What do you deserve? "You can't do that to me?" Why not? Who are you? "I have my rights." You do? According to God's standards, you're never even going to enter His Kingdom, unless you're broken in spirit; unless you're bankrupt, and poverty stricken. Listen, if you don't have any rights, you can't get too mad at somebody who steps on them, right? Anger is a retaliating spirit. Now, the only time it is ever right is when you defend God's holiness, because God does have some rights, 'cause of who He is.

And he says if you do this, if you let yourself get angry, verse 27, you will give place to the devil. By the way, *diabolos* is the word here, it means slanderer – and watch this, it's a little play on words. If you are angry, inevitably what happens when you get angry is you slander. You slander verbally, or you slander in your thoughts and your heart, and you have a place to the slanderer. It's just a repeat of John 8:44 – whenever you start lying, you're of your father the devil. Whenever you start getting mad, you give more evidence of being fathered by Satan. So a person who never seems to have anything but an angry mood, and an angry spirit, and a bitter resentful heart, and an ugly kind of envious, jealous mood, gives evidence that perhaps he's not a Christian at all, and is nothing more than one who has given the devil opportunity to display himself.

So first, exchange lying for speaking the truth, and second, unrighteous fury for holy wrath. Third – here's another practical one: when you become a Christian, he says, you are to exchange stealing for sharing. Stealing is a problem for everybody, isn't it? Boy, I remember when I was a little kid I had a little phase in my life when I thought it was kind of neat to steal things. I got out of that, fortunately, but I went through that little time. I remember my sister used to do that too. They were just as depraved as I was. I mean that's something in us. That's another part of the human system. The old man steals. But the new man doesn't. Look at verse 28; it's a great verse. "Let him that stole steal no more."

Pretty simple; you don't have to be a great exegete to figure that out. "But rather," here's the exchange, "let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Instead of stealing, work so you can give to other people. In other words, be a Robin Hood, you know, only without the stealing part. Do you ever go into a store or something, and the guy rings up your change, or a restaurant or something and he underdoes it, you know. And he gives you the bill, and you know he's like \$3.00 off or something, and you say to him, "Hey, you know, it's more than this. I'd like to pay what it is; I think you're under." He'll go, "Huh?" you know, and look with a stunned look. An honest man – see.

What's up your sleeve? What kind of a con game is this? People don't know how to handle honesty. Whether you are talking about grand theft or petty theft, whether you're talking about robbing from the store or the market, or whether you're talking about stealing money off of your dad's dresser, kids, I don't know, it's all stealing. Stealing is taking anything that doesn't belong to you. Finding something before it's lost. Now, the Bible talks about a lot of different kinds of stealing. Psalm 37:21 talks about the non-payment of debt. If you don't pay your debt, you're stealing from your debtor, or your creditor, rather. It talks about falsifying expense accounts. That's stealing.

Cheating on your taxes; Jesus said, "You'd better render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Not making note of a clerk's error is another way. Another way you can steal is by not paying fair wages to somebody who has worked for you. James 5 says that the cry of the workers reaches the very ears of God when they haven't been paid what they were due. So you can steal a lot of ways - a lot of ways. And by the way, if you are a thief, if you are somebody that steals, I warn you from 1 Corinthians 6: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God."

Thieves - thieves don't inherit the Kingdom of God – neither do drunkards, and fornicators, and homosexuals, and et cetera. But verse 28 tells us the opposite: "Rather let him labor" – which may be a new thing to thieves. Work – boy, the Bible has a great deal to say about work. It's an honorable thing. "But work with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs." The whole idea is to labor, and it uses the word here that means a manual labor, hard work. Exodus 20, verse 9: "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work." Crowd it into six days. Proverbs says so much about this. Second Thessalonians also, chapter 3, and verse 10, couldn't be more straight than this: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."

Now, that would do a lot of things in our society. You don't work - you don't eat. "For we hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies." Now, God condemns that. You're to work. First Timothy says: "If any man provides not for his household, he is worse than an infidel." And I think that's the extended household, not just your children, but those who are related to you who have a need. Work - and you're to work that which is good. You're to work a good work. It should be unselfish, and the point is that when you're all done with this, you're doing it to give to him the needs. In other words, work hard.

Not to pile it higher and get more and more of what you need less and less of. Not just stacking it on, stacking it on, getting more and more, but you're to work in order to give, not get. That's the idea. If I could only get a raise then I'd have more to give to somebody who has need. Boy, what a great way

to go at it. This is radical, revolutionary. The natural approach is to get more and hoard your stuff. Stick in the floors, stick in the wall, get it in a safe, put it in a bag, send it to Switzerland, pile it up. The New Testament principle is to work harder and harder, and more diligently and more diligently, doing good things, so you can have more, and more, and more, and more so you can give more, and more, and more, and more to the people who have need.

That's the whole biblical ethic; that's the whole base of our working. Verse 13 of Luke 14 says, "When you give a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed, for they can't pay you." Isn't that good? They can't pay you. They can't buy a ticket. And God will bless you. That was Paul's manner. In Acts 20, he says, "I worked." "When I ministered to you," he says to the Ephesian elders, verses 33 and 34, "I worked, and not only did I supply my own living so you didn't have to pay me, but I supplied the living of everybody who worked with me." Now, that's hard work, isn't it? You say, "How could the guy do that?" I mean how could anybody possibly work, and earn his own living, and the living of everybody he traveled with, and still preach like Paul did?"

Well, he had one thing going that I don't have, and that is he got instant revelation. He'd just get up and open his mouth, and God would talk. Boy, would I like that. Fourth, another exchange; he says that the new man will exchange another category: corrupt communication will be exchanged for edifying words. This is very practical. Verse 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." Now, I'll be very frank with you. Nothing – nothing – is more distasteful to me than filthy communication. I just really can't tolerate that. I don't like that. I don't want to be a part of that. I don't like to be around that. That's not something that interests me.

By the way, it says, "No corrupt communication." Corrupt is *sapros*; it means rotten. And it has to do with something that is worthless, and useless; that is diseased. A rotten vegetable, or a rotten fruit, is something that is useless and worthless. It smells, it is offensive, it doesn't do anything for anybody, in fact, you don't want to get near it, let alone eat it. That kind of talk has no place. Whether it's off-color jokes, profanity, dirty stories, crude things, there's no place in the life of a Christian for that stuff. Let me give you a verse to remember. Psalm 141:3, mark it down. Psalm 141:3 says: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth and keep the door of my lips."

Listen – if Jesus Christ is the doorkeeper of your lips, then He'll be the one who determine what comes out. There's no place for corrupt communication. I'm not interested in off-color jokes and dirty stories. I'm not interested in innuendo and double entendre. I'm not interested in outright crude and dirty talk. That doesn't interest me at all. Colossians talks about that. And the apostle Paul, in chapter 3, talking about killing all the old things, says, verse 8: "Put off filthy communication out of your mouth." No place for that. You know what? When anybody talks like, that it's pretty obvious what's going on, because Matthew, chapter 12, says, "Out of the abundance of the heart" - what – "the mouth speaks."

The mouth speaks, and you can tell a lot about somebody's heart by what comes out of their mouth. In chapter 5 of Ephesians – look over on the next page, verse 3.

“Fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, let it not be once named among you.” I mean, once, it shouldn't even be there. “Neither should filthiness nor foolish talking.” There's no place for dirty talk, filthy or foolish, obscene talk. And you know, in Romans chapter 3, when it discusses the depravity of man. It shows how man's depravity starts from inside, and comes up through his mouth, and his tongue, and his lips, and it comes out. Get rid of all that. And in its place here's what you do – three features of the speech of the new man, verse 29.

First, it should be edifying – “which is good for edifying” - good for edifying. Whenever you talk, if the Lord is keeping watch over your lips, and you open your mouth, whatever comes out should build other people up; edifying means building up. It should build them up. It should be encouraging, it should be strengthening, it should be spiritually edifying, spiritually positive, spiritually strengthening, spiritually building them up. Is that what happens when you talk? When you pass by someone, and they talk with you for a matter of a few moments, do they go away built up in Jesus Christ? Do they go away edified in Jesus Christ? Is that what it is that happens?

And all around the house during the day, Mom, when you're with your kids, is what you say that which edifies and builds up? Dad, when you take your sons out, and you spend a day with them, when you talk to them, is what happens edifying, and building, and strengthening, and encouraging to them? Secondly, it ought to be necessary. It says in verse 29, the little phrase “to the use,” and literally it means that it fits the needs – as it fits the need. Listen, my mom used to say to me when I was a kid – I'd start to say something, “Hey, Mom, do you know what so-and-so” – and she'd say, “Now, is that necessary? Is that necessary?” It's interesting - don't know whether it's necessary, but is it necessary?

If we just said what was edifying and necessary, we would be - people would flock to be near us. Third, gracious, the end of verse 29: “That it may serve grace to the hearers.” It's just like coming out like a waiter, and giving them a feast of grace. Is there sweetness in what you say, that blesses, and ingratiate. You know, every time you open your mouth, it should be building, it should be fitting, and it should be gracious. That's the way we ought to talk. That's what ought to come out of our mouths, not filthy communication. We have a new heart, and out of the abundance of a new heart should come a new speech. I love what it says in Luke 4:22: “And everybody bore Jesus witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.”

Oh, I love that. When Jesus opened His mouth, graciousness came out, and when He spoke, it was edifying, it was necessary, and it was gracious. And if you let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, according to Colossians 3:16, when you open your mouth, that's what will come out too. And if the

Lord sets a watch over your tongue, and if the Lord is the one who keeps your lips, yours can be the same. Check your words. Colossians - it talks about that our speech should be seasoned with salt. You know, there's a corruption in the world, and salt - we are to be salt to that. You know, when something would corrupt, they'd put salt on it, and salt would retard the corruption.

What about when you talk? Are you a part of the corruption, or do you retard the corruption? Are you salt, or are you just more of the corruption? When you open your mouth, are you the salt that retards the corruption, or are you just part of the corruption? Something to think about. And the result of it all, verse 30: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you are sealed to the day of redemption." Did you know that the Holy Spirit can get sad? That's what grieve means. Do you know that God weeps? Read Him in Jeremiah: "Mine eyes shall run down with tears," He says. And God's heart was broken in Hosea. And Jesus wept over Jerusalem. And Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus.

And here the Spirit of God grieves, and what makes Him grieve? What makes Him grieve is when you, as a believer, don't exchange the old for the new. The Holy Spirit is grieved when He sees lying instead of the truth, when He sees anger instead of forgiveness, when He sees stealing instead of sharing, and when He hears corruption instead of graciousness. And the point that he is making in verse 30 is how could you possibly grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you are sealed till the day of redemption? Now, when we were studying earlier in Ephesians, we studied about the sealing. The idea that I want you to see here is this: when you were saved, the Spirit of God put a stamp on you that said, "This is God's, this is genuine, this is authentic, and this is forever."

And listen, if the Spirit of God has been so gracious as to give you an eternal salvation, if the Spirit of God has been so gracious as to seal you forever, if the Spirit of God is so gracious as to hold you in the palm of His hand till the day of redemption, how could you willfully grieve such a gracious Spirit? That's what he is saying. How could you do that? How could you grieve the Holy Spirit, by whom you are sealed? You know your salvation is forever, you know what He has done for you can't be changed, you know He's given you an eternal gift; now would you abuse it by grieving Him? How could you do that? How could you grieve the very one who has made your body the sanctuary of His own holy presence?

How could you do that? He is the one who has done the magnificent work of setting you apart eternally for God; how could you grieve Him? So, says Paul, the new man is to put away lying, and take truth, put away unrighteous anger for holy wrath, put away stealing for sharing, put away useless, vile speech for edifying, gracious words, and not to give place to the devil, and not to grieve the Holy Spirit. Then a final contrast – we are to exchange natural vices for supernatural graces. Verse 31 - and he just kind of sums it up: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all evil."

Now, listen to what he said. He sums it up. He says, “Look, bitterness” – that smoldering resentment, that brooding, grudging, unforgiving spirit – and then he says, “and all wrath” – and all of that wild reaction – “and all of that anger” – that inside illicit kind of resentment – “and all clamor” - do you know what the word clamor means? It means a violent outburst, yelling in public. You know, all you have to do is, you know, be around your neighborhood for a while, and you hear that, especially in the summer, when the windows are open. Well, we’ve heard some interesting things in our neighborhood. Yelling publicly, that’s clamor. Or really screaming at the guy who cut you off on the road, “You stupid” – you know.

Now watch something. He’s saying if you have bitterness, and wrath, and anger, you’re going to have outbursts, you’re going to smolder on the inside, you’re going to yell at people, you’re going to publicly yell at them, and on the other hand, he adds, evil speaking. Sometimes you’re going to whisper behind their back. Slander can be public, or it can be very quiet, whispery. But the point here is this: you’ve got the wrong relationship to people, see. It’s all relational here. He’s not talking so much about your relation to God; in this whole passage, it’s how you relate to people, because the body is the concept here in this book. And when you deal with people, you can’t be bitter, or wrathful, or angry, or clamorous, or slanderous - evil speaking, blabbering behind their back in secrecy. Get rid of that - put it away.

And along with it put away all *kakia*. That means all evil, general evil, all of it, just get rid of all of it. You know, as Christians we’ve got to deal with each other properly. And these are all personal issues. How are you getting along in your family with these things? How are you getting along with certain people in the fellowship, in the church? Is there any bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking? Put it away. And in its place take this - 32: “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.” You say, “Oh, man, but you don’t know what they did to me; I have a right to be angry. They’ve never changed, and I’m bitter. And when I see that guy, I’m going to clamor. And meanwhile I’m going to evil speak. And I’ve got a right. Look what he did to me.”

And that’s just why verse 32 ends the way it does: “Even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” You want to hear something interesting? God was kind to you. And God was tenderhearted to you. And God was forgiving to you. And you want to know something? You didn’t - what - deserve it. If you’re going to base it on that premise, you’ve missed the point. You don’t yell at somebody because they deserve it; you yell at somebody because you’re sinful. You don’t evil speak about somebody because they deserve it; you evil speak because you’re sinful. You don’t get angry at somebody because they deserve it; you get angry because you’re sinful. You don’t get wrathful and clamorous because somebody deserves it; you do it because you’re sinful.

Because the character of God says, “I don’t care what you’ve done to me, I’ll love you, and I’ll be kind to you, and I’ll be tender to you, and I’ll forgive you.” And Paul says, “And that’s exactly what God expects to see out of you Christians.” If you’re a new creature, it ought to be there. If you’re new in

Jesus Christ, it ought to be there. Oh, would to God that these things were true. Listen, people, if we could be a community in the midst of this world, a community of people who never lie, but always speak the truth, a community of people who never get angry so that it's a sinful anger, but always act in love. If we could be a people who never steal, but only share, if we could be a people who never speak filthy communication, but always minister grace to people who are listening.

If we could be those who have no bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, but are characterized by an incessant kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness, do you think the world might take a note of our message? I think they would. That's the way new men are to act. Examine yourself, whether you are in the faith. Do you speak truth? Do you have control of anger, so that it only operates in righteous ways? Do you share? Do you speak graciously? Do you love in kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness? New men live new lives. Father, we are agreeing with what the Spirit of God is saying in our hearts, and we've all been convicted this morning, and we see the way we've often spoken to the ones we love the dearest, our wives, husbands, children, friends.

Some of us have spoken evil behind someone's back and gossiped. Some of us have been clamorous, and spoken out in public in an unruly way. We've all fought through the battles of anger, lying, evil speech. Lord, help us to know the victory that only You can give, so that on the one hand we never give place to the devil, and on the other hand, we don't grieve the blessed Holy Spirit, who is gracious enough to give us an eternal salvation. Since we have been eternally related to Him, help us never to violate that in a way that would grieve Him.

And, Lord, we know that unless we deal this way with each other, the body can't function. And if the body can't function, Christ can't be manifest, and if Christ isn't manifest, the world can't see and know. May it begin with us, Father, as we obey; work your work by Your Spirit in us, in Christ's name. Amen.

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