

## **Ephesians Chapter 4**

### **Part Two—Practical Instructions on How to Live (4:1-6:24) Our Walk in Christ: Toward Unity and Purity (4:1-6:9) Walk in Unity (4:1-6)**

**Ephesians 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,**

**the prisoner of the Lord....** “Paul’s pastoral appeal is underscored by reference to his own costly commitment.”<sup>1</sup> We read earlier:

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—” (Ephesians 3:1, NKJV)

The material between Ephesians 3:1 and 4:1 has all the earmarks of an Inclusion.

**Beseech you....** I urge you, or I exhort you, and even **I beg you** are good translations as well. In this passage I like “I beg you.” This term is found at other transitions in Paul’s writings that move the reader from doctrine to practice.

“Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God;” (1 Thessalonians 4:1, NKJV)

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” (Romans 12:1, NKJV)

**to walk<sup>2</sup>....** Or, to lead a life or maintain a lifestyle. So, what is the style of your life? Does it measure up to *the calling with which you were called*? Does the behavior of your life and the call of God in your life speak the same message? Of course, it does not, how could it? Yet, we are to try.

We all have a “walk.” In Adam we have one, in Christ we have one.

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,” (Ephesians 2:1-2, NKJV)

As you can see in Ephesians 2:1-2, the behavior of your life was once “*according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.*” How is it different now?

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10, NKJV)

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 274.

<sup>2</sup> walk περιπατέω “to live or behave in a customary manner, with possible focus upon continuity of action—‘to live, to behave, to go about doing.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 504.

**to walk worthy**<sup>3</sup>.... The Greek word “worth” means *fitting* or *proper*, or, *what should be expected*. “The Greek adverb *axiōs* suggests a comparison of two things, like a weighing on a scale. Thus, to live worthily of our calling is to live in a way that matches the stature of that calling. Our conduct is to be “worthy,” “comparable,” or “suitable” to God’s calling.”<sup>4</sup> We are to measure up!

**calling**.... We’ve seen this word before:

“the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,”  
(Ephesians 1:18, NKJV)

It draws our attention to our call to faith.

So, we are to **walk worthy** of our **calling**. This means we are to live differently than we did before Christ came into our lives. Although we have some instinctive ideas on how to do this, Paul will give us details in the next verses.

**Ephesians 4:2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,**

Now we are confronted with the changes that should come into our lives.

“Significantly, relationships within the body of Christ, especially conduct characterized by harmony, are the first issue Paul addresses as an essential element in their living consistently with this calling.”<sup>5</sup>

**with all lowliness**<sup>6</sup>.... Or *humility*.... Humility was not a desired quality before Christianity appeared on the scene. “*Lowliness* was much despised in the ancient world. The Greeks never used their word for humility (*tapeinotēs*) in a context of approval, still less of admiration. Instead they meant by it an abject, servile, subservient attitude, ‘the crouching submissiveness of a slave’.”<sup>7</sup>

Jesus introduced humility into the world by his teaching and by his life. Indeed, it was pride that resulted in the Jews and Gentiles hating each other, and God too. It was humility that allowed those sins to be repented of and forgiven.

“*And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*” (Philippians 2:8, NKJV)

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<sup>3</sup> *worthy* ἀξίως “pertaining to being fitting or proper in corresponding to what should be expected—‘proper, properly, fitting, worthy of, correspond to.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 627.

<sup>4</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 78.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 276.

<sup>6</sup> *with all lowliness* ταπεινοφροσύνη “Humility, lowliness of mind, the esteeming of ourselves small, inasmuch as we are so, the correct estimate of ourselves....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 148.

**and gentleness**<sup>8</sup> or meekness.... This word is in contrast to *harshness*.... “Meekness is ‘the absence of the disposition to assert personal rights, either in the presence of God or of men’.”<sup>9</sup> It is always difficult to determine the extent to which meekness is to be expressed. One thing is certain, harshness is without approval. That is a good starting point.

**with longsuffering**<sup>10</sup> or *patience*.... The willingness to suffer long with difficult people. “...*patience (makrothymia)* is longsuffering towards aggravating people, such as God in Christ has shown towards us...”<sup>11</sup> It is one of the greatest of virtues.

**bearing**<sup>12</sup>.... Or, *enduring, or forbearing*. This “speaks of that mutual tolerance without which no group of human beings can live together in peace.”<sup>13</sup>

We have to consider that not all that is said here is addressed to the faults of others “but also each other’s differences—that is, in areas where no wrongdoing is involved. This is the type of problem we experience when we say something like “why can’t they just speak English.”

No doubt there remained many such differences between the two groups, even as in today’s church with all its diverse elements.”<sup>14</sup>

**with one another in love**.... This is the key, this is what it takes to make the other virtues “work.” And if it is missing, it won’t work.

“...love is constructively to seek the welfare of others and the good of the community....”<sup>15</sup> This is the soil from which all other virtues grow.

*“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,” (Ephesians 3:17, NKJV)*

*“But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.” (Colossians 3:14, NKJV)*

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<sup>8</sup> *gentleness πραΰτης* “gentleness of attitude and behavior, in contrast with harshness in one’s dealings with others—‘gentleness, meekness, mildness.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 748.

<sup>9</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 149.

<sup>10</sup> *longsuffering μακροθυμία* “a state of emotional calm in the face of provocation or misfortune and without complaint or irritation—‘patience.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 306.

<sup>11</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 149.

<sup>12</sup> *bearing ἀνέχω* “endure, bear with, put up with... endure, in the sense hear or listen to willingly, put up with....” William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Adaption of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer’s Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch Zu Den Schrift En Des Neuen Testaments Und Der Ubrigen Urchristlichen Literatur* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 66.

<sup>13</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 149.

<sup>14</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 79.

<sup>15</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 149.

## ***Ephesians 4:3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.***

“It must be observed that believers are not instructed to *make* unity but to *keep* the unity already in existence.”<sup>16</sup> Christ has already made the unity Himself. It is our job to keep it.

***endeavoring***<sup>17</sup> or *diligently* or perhaps best, *eagerly* or perhaps, *making every effort....*

“It is hardly possible to render exactly the *urgency* contained in the underlying Greek verb. Not only haste and passion, but a full effort of the whole man is meant, involving his will, sentiment, reason, physical strength, and total attitude. The imperative mood of the participle found in the Greek text excludes passivity, quietism, a wait-and-see attitude, or a diligence tempered by all deliberate speed. Yours is the initiative! Do it now! Mean it! ... Such are the overtones in verse 3.”<sup>18</sup>

This is the driving force in repenting to a person you have offended. Without it, very little repentance takes place. And since in fact, very little repentance does occur in most of our lives, this would suggest there is very little of the qualities of this word there as well.

***to keep the unity of the Spirit....*** We are to ***keep*** what God has given us.

“God has inaugurated this unity in Christ, through the events described in Ephesians 2:11–22, as a result of which believers, Jew and Gentile together, have access to God ‘in one Spirit’ (2:18).”<sup>19</sup> But we seem to lose it so effortlessly. That brings us back to the God-given task of “*making every effort.*” The opposite of “well that’s just the way I am. Or, “take it or leave it!” That pretty much flies in the face of all that Paul has said here.

Christianity is not that hard if all it takes to believing the right things. It’s the doing of the thing that makes it so distasteful. It flies in the face of our flesh.

***in the bond of peace.*** Here we see Jews and Gentiles bound together as with a rope, and that rope is labeled “peace.” And that’s another thing about Christianity, you can’t do what you want; it’s like you’re in bondage! You are; but to whom?

***“having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,”*** (Ephesians 2:15, NKJV)

Some see in Christianity the power to abolish, others only to burden of binding.

## **The Holy Spirit**

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<sup>16</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.* (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 79.

<sup>17</sup> *endeavoring* σπουδάζω “To be diligent, earnest, or eager.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 153–154.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 279.

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

**one body....** “This *body* is the church, Christ’s body (1:23), which comprises Jewish and Gentile believers alike.”<sup>20</sup> There is no other.

“*and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.*” (Ephesians 2:16, NKJV)

**one Spirit....** “Believers are members of the body by virtue of the work of the Holy Spirit. There is only one body, so also there is only one Spirit.”<sup>21</sup> This Spirit does not work with cross purposes in us. That’s the point, the one Spirit works to one end.

“*For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.*” (Ephesians 2:18, NKJV)

“*in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 2:22, NKJV)

“*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*” (1 Corinthians 12:13, NKJV)

***just as you were called in one hope of your calling....*** We have one hope for we have one savior. Two hopes suggest options, and this is not unlike what Jews and Gentiles once believed. But in fact, there is but one hope for there is but one savior.

“*the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,*” (Ephesians 1:18, NKJV)

“*that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*” (Ephesians 2:12, NKJV)

What is that hope? It is sins forgiven and in the place of death, eternal life—just to mention two.

## **The Lord**

***Ephesians 4:5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism;***

**one Lord....** Jesus Christ is the only Lord, the only way to the Father.

“*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*” (Acts 4:12, NKJV)

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 281.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 281.

**one faith....** “In the context of Ephesians, there is not one faith for Jews and another for Gentiles (as Rom. 3:20 makes clear). There can be only *one faith* since there is only *one Lord*.”<sup>22</sup>

**one baptism....** “The apostle is not making distinctions as to whether it is water baptism or baptism in the Spirit that is in view. The one without the other was an anomaly.”<sup>23</sup> Holy Spirit baptism appears to be easily overlooked in the pursuit of water baptism. Baptism is essentially a “change of condition.” The one baptism is a change of condition from uncleanness to cleanness. There isn’t a second baptism, a second purpose in baptism. For Jew and Gentile it is cleanliness in Christ, sins forgiven, salvation obtained.

## The Father

***Ephesians 4:6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.***

**Father of all....** “...the ‘all’ of whom God is Father means ‘all Christians’, not ‘all people’ indiscriminately,”<sup>24</sup> “the ‘all’ *above, through* and *in* whom God is Father, are his family or household, his redeemed children.”<sup>25</sup>

The Ephesians lived in a world that claimed that many gods existed. These words may be another Trinitarian statement, above, through and in; under these circumstances, no other God’s are possible. There is not one God for the Jews and another for the Gentiles, he is the Father of all his children.

## Spiritual Gifts (4:7-16)

“After establishing the basis of the unity (4:1–6), Paul now examines the means of preserving the unity of the body—namely, by means of the various gifts given to the church (4:7–16).”<sup>26</sup>

## The Giving of Gifts (4:7-10)

***Ephesians 4:7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.***

**each one of us....** This phrase suggests that we are all gifted in some way. Which way **each one of us** is gifted is left unaddressed. Of the many gifts, only five are mentioned in verse 11, and they address only five people of the Church; it’s leaders. They play a critical role in maintaining the unity of the church.

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 283–284.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 284.

<sup>24</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 150.

<sup>25</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 151.

<sup>26</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 83.

**grace**<sup>27</sup>.... The context would suggest that this word would be translated as something like “*special gift*” in this verse.

In chapter 3, Paul mentioned the gift given to him.

“*of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.*” (Ephesians 3:7, NKJV)

**to the measure**<sup>28</sup>.... “Grace was distributed in varied measure to each individual, and this is ultimately due to Christ’s sovereign distribution.”<sup>29</sup> “This denotes that God not only gives each believer a gift; he also determines the amount of the gift.”<sup>30</sup> It is not all the same to each person.

“...grace was given to the apostle Paul for his ministry to Gentiles (cf. 3:2, 7, 8); now it is said to be given to each individual Christian for the benefit of the whole body.”<sup>31</sup> However, the role of *each individual Christian* is not at this time discussed by Paul.

“*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith,*” (Romans 12:6, NKJV)

**of Christ’s gift**.... “The gifts are specific “enablements” or “endowments” given to each believer to empower them for ministry.”<sup>32</sup>

#### **Ephesians 4:8**

**Therefore He says:**

**“When He ascended on high,  
He led captivity captive,  
And gave gifts to men.”**

Here Paul, using an Old Testament Psalm, makes his point that God is the giver of gifts. We don’t make them up ourselves. The source for this statement by Paul is Psalm 68:18

“*You have ascended on high,  
You have led captivity captive;  
You have received gifts among men,  
Even from the rebellious,  
That the Lord God might dwell there.*” (Psalm 68:18, NKJV)

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<sup>27</sup> *grace* χάρις “A favor done without expectation of return; the absolutely free expression of the loving kindness of God to men finding its only motive in the bounty and benevolence of the Giver; unearned and unmerited favor.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> *measure* μέτρον “a unit of measurement, either of length or volume—‘measure.’ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 707.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 287.

<sup>30</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 83.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 288.

<sup>32</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 83.

Paul's use of Psalm 68:18 has similar but not identical meanings to the way David uses it. This is common in New Testament references from the Old Testament.

Reading Psalm 68 we note that it makes reference to both Mount Saini and to Mount Zion. These lines in verse 18 could refer to either. In one sense, it doesn't make a difference; the message behind God's victory at Mt Saini and later at Mt Zion is the same. However, I will explain this verse in terms of David's victory in capturing Jerusalem in I Chronicles 11:4-9.

In Psalm 68, it is God who ascends Mount Zion which is where the king will abide and Mount Moriah (next to Mt Zion) where the ark will dwell. The Psalm pictures God, played by King David, conquering and enslaving the inhabitants of Jerusalem as he advances in victory. As victor he receives gifts from his conquered enemies, they lay their treasure before him and surrender to his rule.

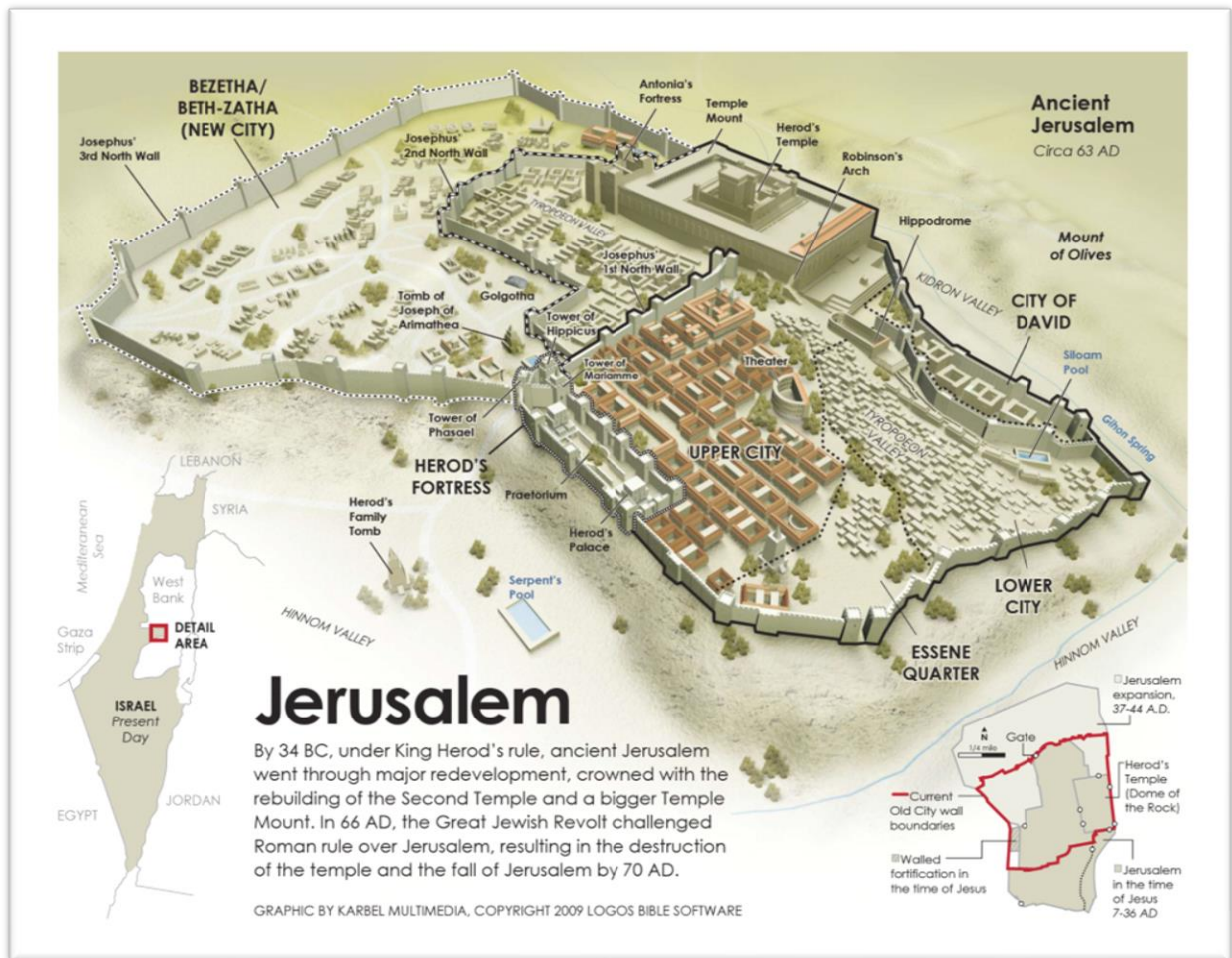
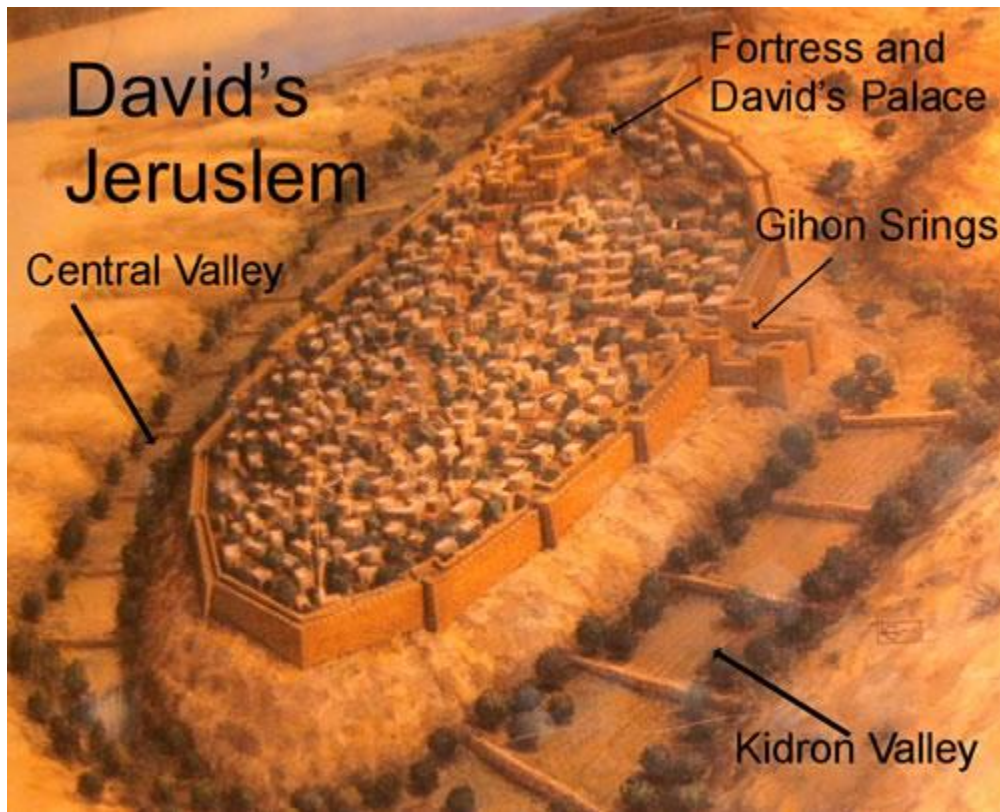
Paul appropriates the ideas in Psalm 68 but repurposes the figures. Here it is Jesus who ascends to heaven itself, the original to which Jerusalem pointed. He leads captives won by his grace, us, Christians. But then He turns right around and gives gifts to those captives. He continues to overwhelm us by grace-giving gifts to us—the point of the story.

In the ancient world, soldiers did not generally receive a significant wage, or any wage at all in some cases, for their service. Instead, they lived off the plunder of their victory plus the gifts distributed to them by their King or commander. Here in our story, the King receives gifts from his conquered foe and then re-distributes them to his sub-commanders who will then distribute them to the ranks. "After every conquest in the ancient world, there was both a receiving of tribute and a distributing of gifts. The conqueror's spoils were divided, and the booty shared..."<sup>33</sup> So, in the fullness of the story, there is both a receiving and giving of gifts. In Psalm 68 David stressed the receiving of the gifts; Paul stresses the giving of the gifts that Jesus himself has just won in his victory at Mount Calvary; both are a part of the story.

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<sup>33</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 291.





***Ephesians 4:9 (Now this, “He ascended”—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?)***

The phrase, ***descended into the lower parts of the earth***, probably addresses Jesus’ incarnation, death and burial, although some would identify it with Peter’s comment: “*by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison*” (1 Peter 3:19, NKJV).

***Ephesians 4:10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.***

After his burial, he who had descended some 33 years earlier in His incarnation, now ascends a victor and king.

Verses 9 and 10 give the reasons why he is able to give gifts to men—He has earned them in his victory over evil and now sits as king over his enemies.

***that He might fill all things.*** The idea here is not that he fills things physically, but that he does so as Lord of all things. This is not unlike Ephesians 3:14-15 where “*the whole family in heaven and earth is named*” meaning that Jesus exercises Lordship over all creation. “Christ fills the universe, not in some semi-physical sense, but by his mighty rule over all things (see on 1:22–23), a notion that is paralleled in the Old Testament where filling the universe, in this sense of exercising sovereign rule, is predicated of God: “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the Lord’ (Jer. 23:24). Here the idea is transferred to Christ: he fills the universe through the exercise of his lordship over everything. This entails his functioning as the powerful ruler over the principalities (1:21) ....”<sup>34</sup> Of course, this is not to deny his omnipresence; that is a factor as well. But I think the more important one in this context is that He is Lord over all His creation.

### **The Distribution of these Gifts (4:11-16)**

***Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,***

“Christ now sets out to accomplish the goal of *filling all things* by supplying his people with everything necessary to foster the growth and perfection of the body (v. 13) [the Church]. Having achieved dominion over all the powers through his victorious ascent, he sovereignly distributes gifts to the members of his body.”<sup>35</sup> This body is the Church; it is the Church that is given gifts.

As far as gifts are concerned, “The New Testament contains five such lists (Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:8–10, 28–30; Eph. 4:11–12; cf. 1 Pet. 4:10–11) which between them number more than twenty different gifts....”<sup>36</sup> But only five gifts are mentioned in this passage.

***apostles, some prophets....*** “The specific mention, first of all, that Christ gave *apostles* and *prophets* corresponds ... to their *foundational* role as the authoritative

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 296–297.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 297.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 298.

recipients and proclaimers of the mystery of Christ....”<sup>37</sup> These were the men who gave us our Bible. And in this official role, they spoke without error.

“There has been a great deal of controversy about spiritual gifts for the modern church, particularly regarding the gift of prophecy. Although some think there is little distinction between prophecy and teaching, most maintain that a prophet imparts new revelation directly from the Lord (1 Cor 14:30–31), whereas a teacher illumines the hearer about past events and revelations. The prophet was prominent in the early church but became virtually unknown by the end of the second century.”<sup>38</sup> It was not until the early stages of the Pentecostal movement in the nineteenth century that they became prominent again. The Pentecostal movement is known for its irrational behaviors and doctrine.

**evangelists....** “Evangelists were engaged in the preaching of the gospel. They are not mentioned elsewhere in the Pauline corpus except at 2 Timothy 4:5, where Timothy is urged to ‘do the work of an evangelist’. The only other New Testament occurrence of the noun is in Acts 21:8, where Philip (one of the ‘seven’ of Acts 6:3–6) is called ‘the evangelist’.”<sup>39</sup>

“Their function resembles that of modern missionaries, who bring the message to new territories.”<sup>40</sup>

“In conclusion, the evangelist’s ministry was to win converts to the faith, the apostles was to establish churches, and the prophets was to bring revelation as needed for believers. Some of these functions may overlap.”<sup>41</sup> As can be seen, an evangelist could be a pastor or a deacon. There is no reason that he could not play other roles as well.

**pastors<sup>42</sup> and teachers....** “The term ‘pastor’ is used only here in the New Testament to refer to a ministry in the church, although the related verb ‘to shepherd’ appears several times in this sense (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2; cf. John 21:16), and the noun ‘flock’ is used of the church (Acts 20:28–29; 1 Pet. 5:2, 3). Pastors, whose functions are similar to those of overseers (cf. Phil. 1:1) and elders (cf. Acts 20:17, with 28; also 14:23; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:17, 19, etc.), exercise leadership through nurture and care of the congregation.”<sup>43</sup> There is one famous passage that uses all three titles in one section.

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<sup>37</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 298.

<sup>38</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 89.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 299.

<sup>40</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 88.

<sup>41</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 88.

<sup>42</sup> *pastors ποιμήν* “one who is responsible for the care and guidance of a Christian congregation—‘pastor, minister.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 541.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 299–301.

"From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church." (Acts 20:17, NKJV)

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [bishops], to shepherd [pastor] the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28, NKJV)

The **pastors and teachers** are linked here in Ephesians 4:11 by a single definite article in the Greek. "In [Ephesians] 2:20, there is only one article used for apostles and prophets, which are clearly different roles; therefore, the article here does not require that pastors and teachers be seen as identical."<sup>44</sup> Although it has often been held that the two groups are identical (i.e., 'pastors who teach'), it is more likely that the terms describe overlapping functions.... All pastors teach (since teaching is an essential part of pastoral ministry), but not all teachers are also pastors. The latter exercise their leadership role by feeding God's flock with his word."<sup>45</sup>

### ***Ephesians 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,***

Here Paul gives us the purpose of the aforementioned gifts. How do they differ?

***for the equipping***<sup>46</sup> ***of the saints....*** "The notion of equipping or preparing, in the sense of making someone adequate or sufficient for something, best suits the context."<sup>47</sup> "The ministry of the officials does not find its fulfillment in their own existence but only in the activity of preparing others to minister."<sup>48</sup> It is "the equipping of the saints" not the equipping of the ministers.

***for the work of ministry***<sup>49</sup> "...an activity of the saints for which the leaders are to prepare and equip them."<sup>50</sup> We tend to read this as "the equipping of the pastors for the work of ministry." But that is an error; it is the saints that are equipped for ministry.

***for the edifying***<sup>51</sup> ***of the body of Christ....*** "...thus enabling them to serve their Lord by serving one another."<sup>52</sup> We serve one another by edifying one another.

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<sup>44</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 88.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 299–301.

<sup>46</sup> *equipping* *καταρτισμός* "...to make adequate, to furnish completely, to cause to be fully qualified, adequacy." Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 679.

<sup>47</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 303.

<sup>48</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 304.

<sup>49</sup> ministry *διακονία* "to render assistance or help by performing certain duties, often of a humble or menial nature—to serve, to render service, to help, service, help." Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 459.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 303.

<sup>51</sup> *edifying* *οικοδομή* "The act of building, building as a process, also that which is built, the building." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>52</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 303.

“The concept that ministry belongs exclusively to clergy is foreign to this context because every believer is given a gift (4:7) and thus every believer must be involved in ministry.”<sup>53</sup>

***Ephesians 4:13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;***

***till....*** The ministry of verse 12 continues [un]***till*** the completion of verse 13. In other words, when we die and go to heaven.

***we all come***<sup>54</sup>.... The meaning of the word ***come*** here is “*to attain or to achieve*” not simply to be present.

This is followed by three expressions, each introduced by the same preposition. “...the three prepositional phrases indicate not three goals but three aspects of one goal—that is, attaining maturity.”<sup>55</sup>

***[until we all attain] to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God....***

***to the unity of the faith....*** This is the first subject that we are to come to agreement over.

“endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3, NKJV)

“...it is precisely the more we know and trust the Son of God that we grow in the kind of unity with one another which he desires.”<sup>56</sup> These are the only two places in Ephesians where unity is mentioned although there are many other words and phrases that imply it.

Both these two phrases are dependent on “***the knowledge of the Son of God***.” Christianity is blown apart into different groups, some orthodox, some heretical, because our ***knowledge of the Son of God*** is defective. We don’t know what we think we know.

Without a common unity in ***the knowledge of the Son of God***, there is no ***unity of the faith*** possible. If Jesus is not understood as the Bible presents Him, then we believe in different Christs with different messages. For instance, there is no unity between evangelicals and liberals because the two have no common ***knowledge of Christ***. For one, Jesus is virgin born, for the other he is of a natural birth; for one he lived a sinless

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<sup>53</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 89.

<sup>54</sup> *come* καταντάω “to attain or arrive at a particular state—‘to come to be, to attain, to achieve.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 150.

<sup>55</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 90.

<sup>56</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 170.

life, for the other he is simply a “good guy.” For the one he dies to bear the sins of the lost, for the other he provides a superior example. For one he conquered death in a bodily resurrection, for the other he “lives in our hearts.” Here are two different Christs and they result in two different faiths—not the unity of the faith of 4:13.

Liberals make much noise concerning ecclesiastical unity while strongly avoiding discussing theological unity. “This expression [***the knowledge of the Son of God***] effectively disposes of the argument that unity can grow without Christian faith or knowledge. On the contrary, it is precisely the more we know and trust the Son of God that we grow in the kind of unity with one another which he desires.”<sup>57</sup>

It is common in our era for unity to be stressed above knowledge. As stated, this is especially so in liberal circles. The reason is obvious, they know there is no unity in doctrine, and they have no intention of pursuing unity on those terms. So, they make an effort to guilt trip those that refuse to pursue unity on the basis of emotion to the absence of ***the knowledge of the Son of God***. They say we should just all “love Jesus” but they don’t explain *which Jesus* we should love. If they did, then that would require a discussion of ***knowledge of the Son of God***. That they must avoid; they are wolves in sheep’s clothing.

So, we must never fail to insist that ***the unity of faith*** is based on ***the knowledge of the Son of God***. That insistence has driven the Church to write out for all to see just what Christians believe. These doctrinal statements by the Church are anathema to those who don’t hold to the historic faith of the Church, because these written statements of faith expose them as embracing doctrines foreign to the commonly held teachings of the Church.

Where does this ***unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God*** lead us?

***to a perfect***<sup>58</sup> ***[mature] man [adult]....*** This is the second goal to which we are to achieve.

***perfect***<sup>59</sup> .... The Greek word here has been a very difficult one for translators. It comes from a stem meaning “An end, term, termination, completion.”<sup>60</sup> When translated into the English language as ***perfect*** it is unconsciously but inevitably read as “sinlessly perfect.” It seems that it is impossible to shake that thought from the English reader. So, it is read incorrectly, and doctrine is created around it that is false. The solution? Stop translating it as “perfect” and come up with another word. In this case in Ephesians a very good translation is ***mature***.

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<sup>57</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 169–170.

<sup>58</sup> ***perfect*** τέλειος “Finished, that which has reached its end, term, limit; hence, complete, full, wanting in nothing.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>59</sup> ***perfect*** τέλειος .... “Finished, that which has reached its end, term, limit; hence, complete, full, wanting in nothing.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>60</sup> τέλος (end) Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

“The word “mature” refers to a person who is fully grown ..., as opposed to a child who is gullible to false teachings....”<sup>61</sup> Paul says, this is the goal of the Christian.

**man**<sup>62</sup>.... This particular word for man can note the difference between a male and a female or the difference between a child and an adult. In this context, Paul is talking about a mature adult in the faith instead of a child in the faith.

***to the measure of the stature***<sup>63</sup> ***of the fullness of Christ***.... This is the third element to which we must achieve.

Paul is making significant demands on Christians. Jesus is the standard to which we measure and conform our lives. “Each member is to use the gift that has been given to him or her in measure (4:7), and as each member fulfills this, then the body will measure (4:13) to Christ’s full stature.”<sup>64</sup> The “body” here refers to the Church.

*“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,”* (Ephesians 4:12, NKJV)

*“till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect [mature] man [adult], to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,”* (Ephesians 4:13, NKJV)

***Ephesians 4:14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,***

Recently, in verse 4:13 we read about “**a perfect man**” meaning a **mature adult**, here we read of the opposite, of **children**.<sup>65</sup> The reason the church is given gifted leaders is to ensure that believers don’t stay children but grow up (4:15) in their faith.

Three phrases will follow *defining the character of children or infants in the faith.*

***tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine***.... Doctrine means “teaching.” Today we often hear things like, “we don’t get bent out of shape over doctrine, we just love Jesus.” “We’re non-denominational.” These same people then proceed to follow very denominational teachings in the practice of their (secret) faith. To you, this is supposed to mean “don’t get excited about following Presbyterian doctrine on various subjects,” while they very carefully follow specific doctrines of their faith: baptism, church government, Armenian theology, dispensational eschatology, and more. They want you to become indifferent over your doctrines, but they have no intention of doing that over their doctrines. By removing the denominational name from

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<sup>61</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 90.

<sup>62</sup> *man* ἀνήρ “A man, i.e., an adult male person.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>63</sup> *stature* ἡλικία “Adulthood, maturity of life, mind or person.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>64</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 90.

<sup>65</sup> Children *νηπιος* “One who cannot speak, hence, an infant, child, baby without any definite limitation of age.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

their church sign, they (rather successfully) attempt to deceive people about their “denomination.” “We’re non-denominational.” What is so surprising about all this is the number of people (children, infants in the faith) that fall for it. Don’t be a child. Doctrine, which means teaching, should be as important to you as it was to the writers of the Bible. To understand what the writers of the Bible wrote, and then apply it, is to both understand Bible doctrine and live it. Mature people pursue that, children don’t.

***by the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting....*** This non-denominational approach to church marketing could fit right here as well. Behind the ruse of non-denominational doctrine are questionable teachings promoted by “deceitful people, ready to manipulate and take advantage of immature and unstable believers.”<sup>66</sup> This is true to a lesser degree in evangelical churches and to a greater degree in Liberalism, Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and New Age Churches.

“Immaturity on the part of believers cannot be treated as a neutral state which will be outgrown in due course. It is a highly dangerous condition because it lays them open to manipulation by cunning people and the forces of error. But it is for precisely such a situation that pastors and teachers have been provided—to prevent believers in their immaturity from falling prey to false teaching and to lead them from the instability which ends in error to the stability of the truth.”<sup>67</sup>

There was in the early church a phrase that went like this, “we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all.”<sup>68</sup> That continues to be of value. Before you embrace a doctrine that would be contrary to that advice, you should ask yourself why you would reject 2000 years of Christian faith? Is this teaching within the ancient traditions of Christianity? If not, then why are you embracing it? And in the case of the PCA, you might also ask, “what does the *Westminster Confession of Faith* teach.” You are not likely to go wrong if you stay within the teachings of these two standards. But the most important question of all is “What does the Bible teach?”

***Ephesians 4:15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—***

Now notice the contrast to immature children tossed about by various teachings. The mature are found:

***[speaking] the truth<sup>69</sup> in love....*** The immature are bickering and arguing, that is a warning to us; it screams “caution.” Right here, earlier, in this very chapter we were taught, “*keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*” The old saying, “we can disagree without being disagreeable” is a good one. Let’s try it.

The word ***speaking*** is not in the Greek text. In a more cumbersome fashion, but a more accurate one, we could translate the phrase “truing (*alētheuontes*) in love’

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<sup>66</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 258.

<sup>67</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 259.

<sup>68</sup> Vincent of Lérins, “*The Commonitory of Vincent of Lérins,*” in *Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lérins, John Cassian* (ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace; trans. C. A. Heurtley; vol. 11; A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series; New York: Christian Literature Company, 1894), 11132.

<sup>69</sup> *truth* ἀληθεύω “To act genuinely, truly. ...to endeavor to express the truth in a loving manner.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).



[which] includes the notions of ‘maintaining,’ ‘living’ and ‘doing’ the truth.”<sup>70</sup> The key word here is *truth*. By living a truthful life in a loving fashion, you are not likely to fall to false doctrine, by means of trickery, and cunning and deceitful efforts to derail you in your faith.

*“Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another.”* (Ephesians 4:25, NKJV)

As a side issue, take note that you can tell the truth without love. If you do so, you have not obeyed these instructions, “I told them the truth!” You have offended them and God—truthfully. So, telling the truth is not good enough. Christianity grabs every part of our body, not just the tongue, and demands a God focus for the part and the whole. Only as the parts obey does the whole obey. Of course, people promoting false doctrine will be offended by truth and may respond by saying that you are mean spirited.

Speaking the truth in love, however, does demand that you speak the truth. Not speaking at all, or, not truthing at all, is a violation of this passage. To fail to rebuke error, graciously if possible, is to fail to love. But the behavior associated with speaking the truth in love does require one to speak the truth even if it offends. Jesus said:

*“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.”* (Luke 17:3, NKJV)

**may grow up....** The solution to these immature failures is to grow up, quickly. How long have you been a Christian? To what degree have you succeeded at this point?

**A Side Issue:** Up until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the “system” in child-rearing focused a child on maturity and responsibility. It was considered a vice, not a virtue to be a child beyond a necessary point in life. There was no such thing as a Peter Pan syndrome or a Play Station. That would have been a most distasteful comment or behavior.

A child often went through an educational process of apprentice, journeyman, and craftsman, beginning at about 10 years of age, that brought him quickly to adulthood and manly responsibility. Young people would often marry in their mid-teens. Today, manly responsibility is a vise, acting like a “large” child is the goal of grown men. One of the many liabilities of such an attitude is the small fortune wasted on adult toys. A common outcome in later life is poverty caused by a waste of money and a lack of savings.

*“He who tills his land will have plenty of bread,  
But he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough!”*  
(Proverbs 28:19, NKJV)

**A Master of . . .**

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<sup>70</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 172.



The Latin word *magister* (teacher, captain, director) is the root for our English word “master.” The title “Mr.” is also an abbreviation for “master.” When we say “Good morning, Mr. Jones,” we might as well say “Good morning, Master Jones.” How is it that any man can be given the designation “Mr.” or “Master?” Connected to the idea of being a teacher, director, or captain is the idea of having authority—authority to lead and teach. Perhaps any grown man worthy of the title “Mr.” should have authority over his own affairs: his life, vocation, and home. Similarly, the female equivalents to “Mr.”—“Mrs.,” “Miss,” and “Ms.”—all derive from the English word “mistress.”

The idea of mastering an art is connected to having the ability to teach that art. “Mastery” of something (from playing the piano to painting to carpentry to gardening to dentistry to law) means having a comprehensive knowledge of the art and superior skills when performing it. In the medieval period a teacher, after being fully trained, might be granted a *magister artium* (MA)—a degree stating he was a “master of the arts” and thus qualified to teach others.

### **Apprentice (Assistant, Learner, Novice, Beginner, Neophyte, Greenhorn)**



Throughout the Middle Ages, most trades (blacksmithing, shoemaking, baking, carpentry, stone masonry, etc.) were controlled and operated by guilds. These guilds also created a community for the tradesmen and often became influential political bodies as well. Typically, a master craftsman (say, a blacksmith) would take on an apprentice (a “learner,” from the Latin *apprendere*, “to lay hold of, grasp”) who would study and work under the master in order to learn the trade. After a few years of training as an apprentice, the apprentice would gradually acquire enough skill to warrant being paid for his work as a craftsman, even if he was not yet a master craftsman.

The apprentice might start working for and under a master as young as age ten to fifteen (in the Middle Ages), and an apprenticeship would last for a period of three to four years or more. The apprentice first would learn the most basic and rudimentary skills by imitating his master, but also had the advantage of seeing the master at work and engaging him in conversation and questions, as well as the opportunity to try out new skills beneath the watchful and correcting eye of the master.

### **Journeyman (Associate, Peer, Competent Craftsman, Day-Traveling Worker)**



Once the apprentice acquired proficient skill in the trade, he would enter a second phase of training and work as a competent tradesman. During this second phase, the tradesman in training was called a journeyman and was no longer regarded as a novice to the profession. A journeyman was still under the supervision of his master, but he could begin to work on viable projects and be paid in the marketplace for his work. A journeyman was indeed on a journey—a journey from beginner to expert, or from learner to teacher. The journeyman was also a sojourner in another way: He would often take trips to visit other masters or to provide services to customers, whereas the apprentice was nearly always at the side of the master. In fact, the name

“journeyman” is derived from the Latin *diurnum*, meaning “day” or “of one day.” The journeyman could be paid a daily wage, as he was now skilled enough to be hired and was ready to leave the shop of his master, taking day trips as necessary to perform his work. The journeyman was, therefore, a competent, job-worthy craftsman who was no longer a beginner or apprentice.

The journeyman, however, was not yet a master. In fact, a journeyman normally would have to work for several years, still under the supervision of his master, until he acquired mastery of his art or trade. When was he able to join the ranks of the masters? When he produced a masterpiece. In many guilds, once a craftsman produced such a qualifying masterpiece, the entire guild would assess the work, grant him the designation of master, and keep the masterpiece as a possession of the guild.

### The Master (Mentor, Expert)



After rising to the level of master, the master craftsman would then be permitted by the guild to take on apprentices of his own and perpetuate the process of training others in the art. The master (a good one, anyway) in effect was also a mentor—one who guided and coached not only the hands of his apprentice but also his mind.

In this medieval context, as well in the contexts of the fine arts, the word “master” is a positive word. Generally, we appreciate the artwork of a master painter or musician (perhaps a *virtuoso*) or the craftsmanship of a “master” carpenter. ....

Still, mastery in the medieval guild and professional tradition can be a rich source of renewal and inspiration. Even in this modern moment, the apprenticeship model for training and education is growing and esteemed. Software and computer training employ this model, as does the military in various ways, and so do many facets of corporate training. Even the typical business internship can follow the apprentice model to some degree. In addition, the model has always been present, to varying degrees, in medicine (with resident training programs), architecture, the culinary arts, carpentry, electrical work, plumbing, and yes . . . education.<sup>71</sup>

**grow up in all things or in every way....** “...that is, in faith, knowledge, unity, and, especially in this context, in love.”<sup>72</sup>

**into Him who is the head—Christ....** Jesus is the standard; the word of God is his divine revelation as to right and wrong. As simple as that statement is, a great deal of the Church does not seem to know it. It’s bad enough that the world turns to Hollywood, athletics, politicians, and public opinion to determine right and wrong, but when Christians do this, the Church is genuinely **tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.** The failure of the Church is not caused by the world; it is caused by the Church’s unwillingness to emulate Christ.

*“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Romans 8:29, NKJV)*

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<sup>71</sup> <https://www.classicalu.com/the-apprenticeship-model-three-levels-to-mastery/>

<sup>72</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 312.

***Ephesians 4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.***

***from whom....*** Christ is not only the goal of our life; he is also the source of that life.

***the whole body, joined and knit together....*** In this summary statement, Paul again returns to the unity of the members of the Church, Jews, and Gentiles. And by these words, we can see that Paul is addressing the entire church, not merely individuals in it.

***by what every joint supplies....*** Previously we were talking about maintaining “*the unity of the Spirit,*” (4:3) about one body, one Spirit, one hope one Lord, one faith, and one Father (4:4-5). This was followed by the individuality of “*grace given to each one of us*” (4:7) in its various gifts. Now we have returned to the union of the various members blessed by their gifts and God’s gifts to the Church. This now needs to work in concert for a common cause. Every joint and each part is to work to build a common body.

Formally the stress was on the individuals’ contribution, now we have returned to the success of the whole.

***every part does its share....*** That is the goal. But in fact, every part does not do its share. To a large degree, that explains the para-church movement — a place outside the church where you can do church work without bothering “professional” church leaders. But, then again, when some churches do provide ministry opportunities to the congregation—and *no one shows up*—that is most frustrating to church leaders trying to do what Paul here teaches. So, failure is found in churches that do not provide ministry opportunities and in churches that do where no one cares. We each need to do our share.

***causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*** We are back to growth again.

Notice again that the church is to be edified, built up. But students that won’t show up for class, or sleep during class, rarely grow—in any school or church. So, the responsibility falls back on us.

***in love....*** “Truth becomes hard if it is not softened by love; love becomes soft if it is not strengthened by truth. The apostle calls us to hold the two together, which should not be difficult for Spirit-filled believers, since the Holy Spirit is himself ‘the Spirit of truth,’ and his firstfruit is ‘love.’ There is no other route than this to a fully mature Christian unity.”<sup>73</sup>

“In conclusion, the emphasis of this section is that each believer is given a gift according to the measure of Christ (4:7–10), which enables each believer to minister toward the goal of edifying the body of Christ. All of this growth is done in the context of love. The past animosity between Jews and Gentiles can no longer exist because now, in Christ,

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<sup>73</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 172.

both are reconciled to each other, making it possible for them to utilize their gifts to build up one another and, in turn, build up the whole body, the church.”<sup>74</sup>

### ***Do Not Walk In Futility (4:17–24)***

“The apostle continues to describe the new standards which are expected of God’s new society or the life which is worthy of God’s call.”<sup>75</sup>

***Ephesians 4:17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,***

“Called to be ‘one’ people, he has argued, we must cultivate unity [chapters 1-3]. Called to be a ‘holy’ people, he goes on to argue now; we must also cultivate purity [chapters 4-6].”<sup>76</sup>

***in the Lord....*** “The writer exhorts with Christ’s authority....”<sup>77</sup>

***that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk....*** The change of status that we read about in chapters 1-3 must now be characterized by a change of walk, lifestyle found in chapters 4-6. What accompanied your life then, must no longer accompany it now.

***the rest of the Gentiles walk....*** Paul no longer recognizes them as simply Gentiles, or the Jews as simply Jews. They are both something different now; they are Christians, a new third race different from both.

So, how do the Gentiles or pagans walk?

***in the futility<sup>78</sup> of their mind....*** The phrase refers to “the emptiness, folly, and ultimate pointlessness that has affected the Gentiles’ faculty of intellectual and moral perception.”<sup>79</sup> They are mentally useless.

“*because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*” ....  
“*Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,*” (Romans 1:21; 24, NKJV)

“*For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.*” (2 Peter 2:18, NKJV)

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<sup>74</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.* (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 91.

<sup>75</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 174.

<sup>76</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 174.

<sup>77</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 276.

<sup>78</sup> *futility παραίωτης* “pertaining to being useless on the basis of being futile and lacking in content— ‘useless, futile, empty, futility.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 624.

<sup>79</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 277.

Some think that you can approach the subject of God and his word in a neutral fashion weighing the pluses and negatives of an argument and come up with a proper, balanced, position. They fail to grasp ***the futility of their mind***, a mind that has fallen in sin. It is impossible to be neutral towards God. This is because of your starting points: in Christ, you are for him, outside Christ you are against him. "...because it lacks the right relationship to God, Gentile thinking suffers from a fatal flaw. It has lost its grasp on reality and fallen prey to folly."<sup>80</sup> Of the two positions, I know that I might believe, and I believe that I might know, it is this second position that is Biblical. This is so because of our starting point, either fallen in sin or redeemed in Christ. Nobody is neutral.

***Ephesians 4:18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;***

***having their understanding (thinking) darkened....*** That is their starting point in life—born in sin and darkened to the things of God. "Since the unbelievers' minds cannot receive the revelation of God, their understanding is darkened—referring to spiritual darkness."<sup>81</sup>

***darkened....*** Lincoln refers to this Greek word by noticing a particularly negative facet to its meaning.<sup>82</sup> He notes that this Greek word is used like this in only two other passages which are in the Book of Revelation.

*"And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit."* (Revelation 9:2, NKJV)

*"Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain."* (Revelation 16:10, NKJV)

This ***darkened understanding*** is characterized by the darkness of hell. Compare this with what Paul said earlier about believers.

*"the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,"* (Ephesians 1:18, NKJV)

The one has an enlightened understanding; the other has a darkened understanding. This does not address intellect or I.Q.; it addresses spiritual insight. But such fallen insight will cause you to do foolish things with your I.Q. i.e., evolution. Smart people who are fallen in sin, believe it; smart people who are redeemed in Christ, don't.

This compares to what Paul said in Romans:

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<sup>80</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 277.

<sup>81</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.* (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 92.

<sup>82</sup> "The rarer verb σκοτοῦν is employed here rather than σκοτίζειν." Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 277.

*“because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish<sup>83</sup> [senseless] hearts were darkened.” (Romans 1:21, NKJV)*

***[having] being alienated<sup>84</sup> from the life of God....*** They are foreigners to God and to His “life.” They are in fact, dead.

*“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,” (Ephesians 2:1, NKJV)*

*“even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),” (Ephesians 2:5, NKJV)*

***because of the ignorance<sup>85</sup> that is in them....*** “Gentile ignorance is viewed as culpable, and elsewhere in Jewish thought ignorance is linked with sin....”<sup>86</sup>

***because of (due to) the blindness [hardness, stubbornness] of their heart<sup>87</sup> ....***  
*“the hardness of their hearts causes their ignorance.”<sup>88</sup> “At the center of their thinking, feeling, and volition, they have hardened themselves to God and to the knowledge of him that was available to them.”<sup>89</sup>*

***Ephesians 4:19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.***

The ESV says this better.

*“who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” (Ephesians 4:19, NKJV)*

*“The natural outgrowth of the unbelievers’ condition is their conduct (4:19).”<sup>90</sup>*

***being past feeling or their moral sensitivity having become dulled or they are “callous”....*** “In this depiction, the lack of moral feeling and discernment on the part of

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<sup>83</sup> *foolish ἀσύνητος* “Without insight or understanding ... unintelligent, foolish.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>84</sup> *alienated ἀπαλλοτριόμαι* “to be a stranger, to be a foreigner.” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 132.

<sup>85</sup> *ignorance ἄγνοια* “Want of knowledge, ignorance which leads to mistaken conduct and forbids unconditional imputation of the guilt of the acts performed....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>86</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 278.

<sup>87</sup> *heart καρδιά* “in biblical usage ‘heart’ and ‘mind’ cannot be separated....” John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 177.

<sup>88</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 92.

<sup>89</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 278.

<sup>90</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 93.

the Gentiles means an inability to exercise any restraint in their plunge into degrading activities.”<sup>91</sup> “Their lack of care for what is right and wrong is described as callousness, resulting in moral apathy.”<sup>92</sup>

**have given themselves over to:**

**lewdness**<sup>93</sup> [**debauchery**].... “that vice which ‘throws off all restraint and flaunts itself, “unawed by shame or fear,” without regard for self-respect, for the rights and feelings of others, or for public decency.’”<sup>94</sup>

**uncleanness**<sup>95</sup> [**impurity**].... “...encompasses riotous and excessive living, [and] can refer to unrestrained sexual behavior.”<sup>96</sup>

**greediness**<sup>97</sup> [**covetousness**].... “the prepositional expression ‘with covetousness’ suggests that the indecent conduct already described was practiced with a continual lust for more. The pagan way of life was characterized by an insatiable desire to participate in more and more forms of immorality.”<sup>98</sup> “In this depiction, the lack of moral feeling and discernment on the part of the Gentiles means an inability to exercise any restraint in their plunge into degrading activities.”<sup>99</sup>

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” (Romans 1:28–32, NKJV)

**A New Mind (Positively) (4:20–32)**

***Ephesians 4:20 But you have not so learned Christ,***

<sup>91</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 279.

<sup>92</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 93.

<sup>93</sup> *lewdness* ἀσελγεία “...lasciviousness, license, debauchery, sexual excess, absence of restraint, insatiable desire for pleasure.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>94</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 323.

<sup>95</sup> *uncleanness* ἀκαθαρσία “...the state of moral impurity, especially in relationship to sexual sin—‘impurity, immorality, filthiness.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 769.

<sup>96</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 323.

<sup>97</sup> *greediness* πλεονεξία “...a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions or to possess more things than other people have, all irrespective of need—‘greed, avarice, covetousness.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 290–291.

<sup>98</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 323.

<sup>99</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 279.



**learned**<sup>100</sup> **Christ....** The phrase “is without parallel. The phrase ‘to learn a person’ appears nowhere else in the Greek Bible, and to date, it has not been traced in any prebiblical Greek document.”<sup>101</sup> In other uses of this phrase in the Bible the person named gives the instruction in some virtue, only here is the person the virtue and the object of the learning.

“Learning Christ means welcoming him as a living person and being shaped by his teaching. This involves submitting to his rule of righteousness and responding to his summons to standards and values completely different from what they have known.”<sup>102</sup>

They “learned Christ” because they were taught Christ by the apostles, especially Paul. They learned Christ the same way we do—by teaching and preaching.

“*And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*” (Acts 5:42, NKJV)

Teaching and preaching are the means by which we *learn Christ.* “...learning Christ involved not only learning about but also being shaped by, the risen Christ who was the source of a new way of life....”<sup>103</sup>

“*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*” (Romans 8:29, NKJV)

If you put yourself outside the context of the teaching and preaching of Christ and His Word, then you will never learn Christ.

***Ephesians 4:21 if indeed (or since) you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:***

***if indeed***<sup>104</sup> ***or since....*** The opening words of this phrase imply confident assumption, not doubt, so a better translation might be “*since you have heard....*”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *learned* *μανθάνω* “to acquire information as the result of instruction, whether in an informal or formal context—to learn, to be instructed, to be taught.” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 326.

<sup>101</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 324.

<sup>102</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 324.

<sup>103</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 280.

<sup>104</sup> *if indeed εἴ γε* “A particle of emphasis or qualification meaning if at least, if indeed, if so be, followed by the indic. and spoken of what is taken for granted....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>105</sup> “The statement introduced by the construction εἴ γε, which turns up only five times in the New Testament (2 Cor. 5:3; Gal. 3:4; Eph. 3:2; 4:21; Col. 1:23), makes explicit an underlying assumption of the preceding assertion. Here it does not express doubt (‘if, indeed, you have heard’) but implies confidence or certainty: ‘you must surely have heard’....” Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 226.

***you have heard<sup>106</sup> Him....*** This phrase "...draws attention to the initial response to Christ..."<sup>107</sup> One responds by attentive hearing.

***have been taught<sup>108</sup> by Him....*** This "...picks up the point of ongoing instruction...."<sup>109</sup> It is really the first element in a reverse sequence of three, 1) taught, 2) heard, 3) learned.

***(just) as the truth is in Jesus....*** "...the gist of the clause is about the content of Christian truth being summed up in Jesus."<sup>110</sup>

"Since Christians believed that Christ was a living person whose presence was mediated by the proclamation and teaching about him, learning Christ involved not only learning about, but also being shaped by, the risen Christ who was the source of a new way of life as well as of a new relationship with God."<sup>111</sup>

The word ***truth*** has been used before in Ephesians.

*"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,"* (Ephesians 1:13, NKJV)

It will now be used three times in this passage.

*"if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:"* (Ephesians 4:21, NKJV)

*"and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."* (Ephesians 4:24, NKJV)

*"Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another."* (Ephesians 4:25, NKJV)

Its repetitive use here in this passage suggests a central role in Paul's thinking.

Truth is under attack. Two expressions of this attack are found in insisting that truth is relative and that Christ and Jesus are two separate subjects.

"This truth is not relative truth, which assumes that what may be existentially true for one person may not be true for another. .... Some conjecture that there is a difference

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<sup>106</sup> *heard* ἀκούω "...to believe something and to respond to it on the basis of having heard—to accept, to listen to, to listen and respond, to pay attention and respond, to heed." Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 372.

<sup>107</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 324.

<sup>108</sup> *taught* διδάσκω "...to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting—to teach, teaching." Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 412.

<sup>109</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 325.

<sup>110</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 280.

<sup>111</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 280.

between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history. Not so, they are one and the same person.”<sup>112</sup> This is a distinction made by liberals that is not made in the Bible. It has one purpose, the deny the truth of God’s word.

***Ephesians 4:22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,***

***put off....*** This they did at the time of their conversion, and they are to continue to do so all their lives. “It is because we have already put off our old nature, in that decisive act of repentance called conversion, that we can logically be commanded to put away all the practices which belong to that old and rejected life.”<sup>113</sup>

***which grows corrupt***<sup>114</sup> ***according to the deceitful***<sup>115</sup> ***lusts***<sup>116</sup>.... Putting off the old man is like putting off old dirty clothes that have now begun to stink and will do so even more in the future.

“A false perspective on reality generates a confusion of desires which can never be satisfied because they have lost touch with what is true. Such desires serve the power of deceit, and so are themselves ultimately illusory and contribute to the ruin of the old person.”<sup>117</sup>

“among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” (Ephesians 2:3, NKJV)

***Ephesians 4:23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind....*** “If heathen degradation is due to the futility of their minds [Ephesians 4:17-19], then Christian righteousness depends on the constant renewing of our minds.”<sup>118</sup>

Paul teaches this same lesson to the Roman church.

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:2, NKJV)

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<sup>112</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 96.

<sup>113</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 180.

<sup>114</sup> *corrupt φθείρω* “to cause someone to become perverse or depraved, as a type of moral destruction—‘to deprave, to pervert, to ruin, to cause the moral ruin of.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 769.

<sup>115</sup> *deceitful ἀπάτη* “to cause someone to have misleading or erroneous views concerning the truth—‘to mislead, to deceive, deception.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 366.

<sup>116</sup> *lusts ἐπιθυμία* to strongly desire to have what belongs to someone else and/or to engage in an activity which is morally wrong—‘to covet, to lust, evil desires, lust, desire.’ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 290.

<sup>117</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 286.

<sup>118</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 182.

**renewed**<sup>119</sup>.... The first part of this Greek word, ἀνα, means **again**, and the second part, νεόω, is the Greek word for **new**. You need new thoughts; your thoughts before you met Jesus were defective. Your thoughts are not neutral, able to honestly sort between competing ideas. You have thrown in your lot with Satan, and your thoughts are *naturally* corrupt.

**the spirit of your mind**.... “this restoration to right thinking will result in right conduct....”<sup>120</sup> Thinking leads to doing.

“...being a Christian means having undergone a radical change—from the old person to the new, from futility of mind to renewal of mind, from the service of deceit to the service of truth, from a process of corruption to one of renewal, from a life of unrestrained passions to one of righteousness and holiness.”<sup>121</sup>

**Ephesians 4:24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.**

**put on**.... The word picture is of a person taking off an old garment and putting on a new one. YOU are called to take action; you are not called to “let go and let God.” That means do nothing; instead, you are instructed to do something.

**the new man**.... “...the new person is not yet totally new. The present tense of this infinitive underlines the continuous nature of the renewal that is still required, and the passive voice suggests that this takes place as believers allow themselves to be renewed. ... There is to be a constant development of believers’ perception which will result, in practice, in their ability to choose the good.”<sup>122</sup>

**which was created**<sup>123</sup>.... The new humanity is God’s creation, not ours.

“First, we have experienced a new creation [4:24], and secondly, in consequence, we have received a new mind which is constantly being renewed [4:23].”<sup>124</sup>

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10, NKJV)*

“Moreover, the two are organically related to one another. It is our new creation which has given us a new mind, and it is our new mind which understands our new creation and its implications. Since it is a new creation in God’s holy image, it has involved for

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<sup>119</sup> *be renewed* ἀνανεώω “...to cause something to become new and different, with the implication of becoming superior—‘to make new, renewal.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 593.

<sup>120</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 290.

<sup>121</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 291.

<sup>122</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 287.

<sup>123</sup> *created* κτίζω “to make or create something which has not existed before—‘to create, creation’ (in the NT, used exclusively of God’s activity in creation).”<sup>123</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 513.

<sup>124</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 183.

us the total putting away of our old fallenness and the thankful putting on of our new humanness."<sup>125</sup>

"...when God recreates us in Christ according to his own likeness, we entirely concur with what he has done. We 'put off' our old life, turning away from it in distaste, and we 'put on' the new life he has created, embracing it and welcoming it with joy."<sup>126</sup> We are active participants in God's work.

"Thus, corruption and creation, passion and holiness, deceit and truth are set in opposition to one another, indicating the total incompatibility of the old and the new, what we were in Adam and what we are in Christ."<sup>127</sup>

**after (the image) of God....** Or as Paul says in Colossians:

*"and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,"* (Colossians 3:10, NKJV)

Or as Paul says in Romans:

*"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."* (Romans 8:29, NKJV)

"The reference in Ephesians also shares these connotations of the motif of the new Adam in whom the image of God is restored...."<sup>128</sup>

*"Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness....""* (Genesis 1:26, NKJV)

This verse brings us to the next phrase in this passage.

**in true....** "The evil desires which characterized the old person sprang from deceit (v 22). Now, by contrast, the virtues which characterize the new person can be said to come from the truth."<sup>129</sup>

**righteousness and holiness....** The new humanity has been recreated to be like God.

*"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,"* (Ephesians 1:13, NKJV)

*"if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:"* (Ephesians 4:21, NKJV)

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<sup>125</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 183.

<sup>126</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 182.

<sup>127</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 181–182.

<sup>128</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 287.

<sup>129</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 288.

“As the new creation in God’s likeness, believers are to be righteous as he is righteous and holy as he is holy.”<sup>130</sup>

### ***A New Walk (4:25–5:17)***

A new walk is a product of a new faith. We are now obligated to rehabilitate our lives to the teachings of Christ. The process of rehabilitation is critical to success, but it must be remembered that this is successful only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Success is not a natural mechanical by-product of the process; it is a supernatural mechanical by-product of the process.

### ***Lying***

***Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another.***

***Therefore, putting away lying....*** Or “so having put away falsehood.” Because verses 17-24 in the above verses are true, ***therefore***, do this—we are now given some follow-up illustrations as to what ***putting off*** or ***putting away*** would look like in a believer’s life.

***putting away***<sup>131</sup>.... This is the same word in verse 22, *putting-off*.

*“that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” (Ephesians 4:22, NKJV)*

The giving of the instructions to put off lying, and other sins, clarify Paul’s belief that we, by God’s spirit can and should change. At one time, we would not have been able to do this, but these are new times, now, in Christ, we can. So, the giving of the instructions testifies to the fact that we can do this. The living of our lives ought to be a demonstration of our faith.

***lying***<sup>132</sup>.... Lying identifies us with Satan, suggesting that he is our lord. If that is not the case, if we are children of God, then we must put-off the behaviors of Satan.

*“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” (John 8:44, NKJV)*

But, you can’t put off by putting off. *Put off’s* need *put on’s* in order to work; what is the put on?

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<sup>130</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 288.

<sup>131</sup> *putting away ἀπορθημι* “...to cease doing what one is accustomed to doing—‘to stop, to cease.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 657.

<sup>132</sup> *lying ψεῦδος* “Describes anything that is false or untrue.” Francesco Bianchi, “Deception,” ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

**Let each one of you speak truth<sup>133</sup> with his neighbor....** Paul will address truth six times in Ephesians; this is the fourth time so far. It is the first of his several illustrations on the put-off/put-on pattern that he has addressed. One might wonder, why did he start with this one? Perhaps it is because “*the word of truth*” is “*the gospel of your salvation*” 1:13. Foundational to the message of Christ and thereby the whole of the Christian faith is the truth of that message. In addition, Christians must have a reputation as truth tellers if the gospel is to be embraced by others as true.

“The point has already been established earlier in 4:15, where the writer insists that the essential means of building up the body of Christ is speaking the truth in love.”<sup>134</sup>

“*but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—*” (Ephesians 4:15, NKJV)

“They have put on ‘the new person’ which has been created in God’s likeness. Accordingly, *the truth*, which comes from God himself (v. 24) and is found in Jesus (v. 21), should be the distinguishing mark of their speech.”<sup>135</sup> Paul is referencing Zechariah 8 in his remarks.

**with his neighbor....**

“*These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace;*” (Zechariah 8:16, NKJV)

**for we are members of one another.** “Here at 4:25, the apostle’s point is that in the body which is a model of harmonious relationships .... We are ‘no longer alienated, independent beings, but people who now belong together in unity with others whom we must not rob of the truth....”<sup>136</sup>

“*For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.*” (Ephesians 5:30, NKJV)

As a practical illustration, this is much like a hand lying to the legs and moving a chair just as the legs sit down. The members of the body just don’t do that. We, as members of the body of Jesus Christ, must not either.

**Anger**

**Ephesians 4:26 “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath,**

**Be angry, and do not sin....** In this passage, Paul is quoting King David who was on one occasion justly angry because of lies told about him. He brings that same message

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<sup>133</sup> *truth ἀλήθεια* “...truth, true, sincerity, integrity. Indicates the quality or state of being real or genuine—often in the sense of visible and verifiable reality, demonstrated by facts, actual events, or proven character.” Douglas Mangum, “Truth,” ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

<sup>134</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 301.

<sup>135</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 337.

<sup>136</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 338.

to us; you may have just reason to be angry, but you do not have justification to sin concerning that anger.

*“Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah”*  
(Psalm 4:4, NKJV)

However, one Christian writer says, “...there is a great need in the contemporary world for more Christian anger. We human beings compromise with sin in a way in which God never does. In the face of blatant evil, we should be indignant, not tolerant, angry not apathetic. If God hates sin, his people should hate it too.”<sup>137</sup>

*“But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”*  
(Revelation 2:6, NKJV)

However, there is also an anger and hate that is sinful. The first time we read of anger in the Bible is in Genesis 4.

*“but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” ”* (Genesis 4:5–7, NKJV)

This was followed by the murder of Able.

“It is essential to keep short accounts of anger. Prolonged anger gives opportunity to the devil to twist and distort truth, causing anger to mount and possibly resulting in dissension and revenge.”<sup>138</sup>

*“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”* (James 1:19–20, NKJV)

I think, at this point, that it is important to address “the modern notion of the healthiness of expressing rather than suppressing anger...”<sup>139</sup> This is a popular opinion in some psychological counseling and is advocated by some as a means of dealing with anger and hatred helpfully. That, of course, is nonsense and never works. It simply exacerbates and habituates the sinful behavior. So, you have two options, God’s, put-off the anger, and the world’s, expressing the anger. In expressing the anger, you will often find yourself mentally and physically performing ritual murder. Which brings us to Psalm 1:

*“Blessed is the man  
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,  
Nor stands in the path of sinners,  
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;”* (Psalm 1:1, NKJV)

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<sup>137</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 186.

<sup>138</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 97–98.

<sup>139</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 301.



In reality, all sin should be suppressed, always and at all times. And, the ultimate counsel in such situations is repentance; suppression is only a temporary step. If one fails to suppress anger, and instead rationalizes it and practices it, then because of these actions, the sin is now justified in their mind. As a result, no one seeks a solution. And that means, there is no Biblical hope for a solution. Relationships stay damaged for life.

***and do not sin....*** How do you not sin? By handling the anger quickly and Scripturally; as in:

***do not let the sun go down on your wrath....*** “In the apostle’s admonition, this expression with its reference to sunset is used as a warning against brooding in anger or nursing it. It is to be dealt with promptly, with reconciliation being effected as quickly as possible.”<sup>140</sup> “In order to prevent anger from degenerating into sin a strict time limit is to be put on it....”<sup>141</sup> This means to deal with your anger well, and quickly. That might mean....

A godly life requires a godly resolution to sin.

*“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.”* (Luke 17:3, NKJV)

*“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”* (Matthew 5:23–24, NKJV)

Fail to practice this, and you will *never* become much of a Christian.

When all is said and done, we must remember what God thinks of most of our anger.

*“A soft answer turns away wrath,  
But a harsh word stirs up anger.”* (Proverbs 15:1, NKJV)

*“A wrathful man stirs up strife,  
But he who is slow to anger allays contention.”* (Proverbs 15:18, NKJV)

*“Make no friendship with an angry man,  
And with a furious man do not go,”* (Proverbs 22:24, NKJV)

*“Scoffers set a city aflame,  
But wise men turn away wrath.”* (Proverbs 29:8, NKJV)

*“A fool vents all his feelings,  
But a wise man holds them back.”* (Proverbs 29:11, NKJV)

*“Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry,  
For anger rests in the bosom of fools.”* (Ecclesiastes 7:9, NKJV)

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<sup>140</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 340.

<sup>141</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 340.

These are but a small selection on what the Bible says of anger.

***Ephesians 4:27 nor give place to the devil. Or, give an opportunity to the devil.***

Satan “loves to lurk round angry people, hoping to be able to exploit the situation to his own advantage by provoking them into hatred or violence or a breach of fellowship.”<sup>142</sup> Angry people will give place to the devil in their lives—and the failures of their lives, their relationships, show it.

### **Theft**

***Ephesians 4:28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.***

“You shall not steal.” (Exodus 20:15, NKJV). A great deal of proper behavior is written in the hearts of men. I suppose every culture in the world has a prohibition against theft. So, this idea was not new to them. But like most people in the world, they were not keeping it. Theft is a vice that rots civilization; honesty is a virtue that enhances civilization.

***Let him who stole steal no longer....*** This is the put-off.

***but rather let him labor***<sup>143</sup>.... This is the put-on.

“It is not enough that the thief stops stealing. Let him start working, *doing honest work with his hands*, earning his own living. Then he will *be able* not only to support himself and his family but also *to give to those in need*. Instead of sponging on the community, as thieves do, he will start contributing to it.”<sup>144</sup>

And Paul practiced what he preached.

*“nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”* (2 Thessalonians 3:8–10, NKJV)

Some of the most popular forms of theft are from lifestyle sins that result in medical issues. With the natural consequence of these behaviors, the physical decay of the body, one can go on “disability” and live off the backs of others with higher moral lifestyle and standards. For some reason, the obvious theft of such behavior is rarely seen by the thief. So, he continues to steal.

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<sup>142</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 187.

<sup>143</sup> *labor κοπιᾶω* “to engage in hard work, implying difficulties and trouble—‘hard work, toil, to work hard, to toil, to labor.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 514.

<sup>144</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 187–188.

Of course, all disability is not theft or sin. God does make provision for the poor, the widow and the orphan. However, often the provision involves work. The story of Ruth illustrates the point. I find it interesting that Boaz instructs his workers to “*let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.*” Ruth 2:16. Notice that Boaz did not tell them to take some grain out of their bag and give it to her. If she was not willing to work, she would have gone without.

But that is not our system today; we give a cash debit card to those that do not and will not work and require nothing of them for the money. That is an offense to those who work.

***that he may have something to give him who has need.*** If you are not working and giving, you have not put-on and are therefore always tempted to steal. You have not put on godly habits; you are disobedient and unstable in your Christian life. Holiness is not your possession. Working and giving is necessary to Godly success. Without these things, you are simply hanging on the fringes of Christianity, not committed yet.

This statement by Paul is testimony that *some need help* and giving to such people is a scriptural virtue and requirement. But the virtue is in *voluntary giving*, not in coercing those that do not see merit in giving to just anyone, especially the dishonest and lazy. Giving to the widows, orphans and poor who could not care for themselves was a long-standing requirement in Israel.

“*Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,*” (1 Timothy 6:18, NKJV)

But these should not be confused with others who are of bad character.

“*He who has a slack hand becomes poor,  
But the hand of the diligent makes rich.*” (Proverbs 10:4, NKJV)

“*Laziness casts one into a deep sleep,  
And an idle person will suffer hunger.*” (Proverbs 19:15, NKJV)

“*A little sleep, a little slumber,  
A little folding of the hands to rest;  
So shall your poverty come like a prowler,  
And your need like an armed man.*” (Proverbs 24:33–34, NKJV)

For people like these mentioned in Proverbs, one is not asked to give. There is in scripture a poverty that is deserved, and there is a poverty that is undeserved—to these you should give. Some, because of their bad character, deserve to be poor, others do not. The wise will learn the difference. Many today do not know the difference.

### ***Corrupt Communication***

***Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.***

***Let no corrupt word....*** “*Tongue control?* It will never be achieved unless there is first of all *heart and mind control....* When any Christian comes to the point of yielding to the

Lord—in full sincerity, cost what it may—control of his thought life, the problem of managing his tongue will be solved....”<sup>145</sup>

**Let no corrupt (rotten) word proceed out of your mouth....** A **corrupt**<sup>146</sup> word is a “bad, rotten, putrid”<sup>147</sup> word. We see this Greek word used in Luke.

*“For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.”* (Luke 6:43, NKJV)

“What is prohibited under the category of evil talk (cf. Col 3:8; Eph 5:4) includes obscenity, abusive language, and spreading malicious gossip. The focus is on the destructive power of words and the harm they can produce in communal life.”<sup>148</sup>

*“Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.”* (James 3:5–6, NKJV)

“Our words reveal what is in our hearts ... and we shall have to give an account on judgment day of every careless word we have uttered.”<sup>149</sup>

*“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.”* (Matthew 12:36, NKJV)

**but what is good....** A **good** word is “benevolent, profitable, useful.”<sup>150</sup> “Believers are to achieve what is good with their mouths as well as with their hands....”<sup>151</sup>

**but what is good for necessary edification....** Using our words, we are to be builders of human lives.

*“There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health.”* (Proverbs 12:18, NKJV)

We read earlier in Ephesians 4:12 that the Church is given *leaders* to equip, work, and edify the body of Christ—believers. Now we read that we, *believers*, are to edify the “hearers” of our words.

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<sup>145</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1988), 170.

<sup>146</sup> *corrupt σαπρός* “pertaining to that which is harmful in view of its being unwholesome and corrupting—‘harmful, unwholesome.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 229.

<sup>147</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>148</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 305.

<sup>149</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 188.

<sup>150</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>151</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 344.

**that it may impart grace to the hearers.** “Instead of harming others with their words, believers are to ensure that their language has a beneficial effect on their listeners.”<sup>152</sup>

### ***Grieving the Holy Spirit***

***Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.***

This is in association with the prior verse. I’m sure all sins grieve the Holy Spirit; however, it is this one, corrupt speech, that God now points us to when he says this.

***grieve***<sup>153</sup>.... Paul is probably alluding to Isaiah 63:10.

*“But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit;  
So He turned Himself against them as an enemy,  
And He fought against them.”* (Isaiah 63:10, NKJV)

The relationship to grieving the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 4 and Isaiah 63 is disconcerting. The implication is that harsh and unchristian verbal attacks on the Christian community can result in God attacking the one with the corrupt—bad, rotten, putrid speech—*“He turned Himself against them as an enemy.”* People sow hate and then reap hate, and then wonder why their life is such a mess. In fact, its no wonder at all.

*“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”* (Galatians 6:7, NKJV)

***by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.***

***sealed***<sup>154</sup>.... In the ancient world, a seal often served as something of a lock. Remember the stone that covered Jesus’ tomb was sealed. A seal on documents was a guarantee that unauthorized people did not read the document.

Sealing is what God does in Holy Spirit baptism, which is visually illustrated in water baptism. Christians are sealed, that is secure in Christ; they cannot be lost because He is the one who seals and holds them, and not they themselves.

***redemption***<sup>155</sup>.... Redemption refers to a purchase that results in our freedom. This is generally associated with our initial salvation when we become the property of Jesus. This is the point in Ephesians 1:7:

*“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”* (Ephesians 1:7, NKJV)

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<sup>152</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 306.

<sup>153</sup> *grieve* λυπέω “to be grieved, sad, sorrowful....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>154</sup> *sealed* σφραγίζω “to use a seal to close or to make something secure—‘to seal, to put a seal on, to make secure.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 59.

<sup>155</sup> *redemption* ἀπολύτρωσις “...to release or set free, with the implied analogy to the process of freeing a slave—‘to set free, to liberate, to deliver, liberation, deliverance.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 487.

However, in Ephesians 1:14 and here, 4:30, there is an eschatological point made.

*“who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”* (Ephesians 1:14, NKJV)

*“... by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”* (Ephesians 4:30, NKJV)

The “*day of redemption*” refers to the last day in human history when the fullness of our redemption is experienced.

In other words, “...the ‘sealing’ and the ‘redemption’ refer respectively to the *beginning* and the *end* of the salvation process.”<sup>156</sup> It is the one that does this, the Holy Spirit, that we must not grieve.

## A Summary of Put-Off Behaviors

***Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.***

At this point, Paul sums up his previous points.

***bitterness....*** “The first on the list of vices to be removed is ... “bitterness,” which indicates the hard-heartedness that harbors resentment about the past....”<sup>157</sup> “The Greeks defined this word as long-standing resentment, as the spirit which refuses to be reconciled.”<sup>158</sup> The common element here is that this bitterness is “long-standing,” it goes back into ones “past” and never responds to Christ command to forgive and love. It hangs on defiling the soul and those around this person.

*“looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled,”* (Hebrews 12:15, NKJV)

This verse explains a lot of church splits.

You that name the name of Christ, from you it must be *put away*.

***wrath [thumos]....*** “a state of intense anger, with the implication of passionate outbursts—‘anger, fury, wrath, rage.’”<sup>159</sup> This is *explosive short-term* anger.

***anger [orgē]....*** “Wrath, anger as a state of mind.”<sup>160</sup> A “feeling of gnawing hostility.”<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 189.

<sup>157</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 308.

<sup>158</sup> William Barclay, ed., *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press, 1976), 159.

<sup>159</sup> *wrath θυμός* Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 761.

<sup>160</sup> *anger ὀργή* Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>161</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 308.

“The Greeks defined *thumos* [wrath, above] as the kind of anger which is like the flame which comes from straw; it quickly blazes up and just as quickly subsides. On the other hand, they described *orgē* [anger, our current word] as anger which has become habitual. To the Christian, the burst of temper and the long-lived anger are both alike forbidden.”<sup>162</sup> But that “state of mind” long-term anger is far worse. It never goes away; it must go away.

**clamor....** “the sound of a loud scream or shout—cry, shout, scream.”<sup>163</sup> “It suggests the lack of restraint which erupts in angry yelling....”<sup>164</sup> It is an anger that is verbal, public, noisy and out of control. Apparently, they had people like that in their day just as we do in ours.

**evil speaking....** “to speak against someone in such a way as to harm or injure his or her reputation ... to revile, to defame, to blaspheme, reviling.”<sup>165</sup> The “abuse and vilifying of others...”<sup>166</sup> These have a passionate desire to hurt people with their words.

**be put away....** “to destroy, with the implication of removal and doing away with....”<sup>167</sup> Put-off.

**with all malice....** “a feeling of hostility and strong dislike, with a possible implication of desiring to do harm—hateful feeling.”<sup>168</sup> This is ongoing hate and is to be put off as well.

## A Summary of Put-On Behaviors

***Ephesians 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.***

The six evil behaviors above are resolved in the three good behaviors listed here.

But note, **we cannot put off by putting off**; we put off only **by putting on**. When these become the *habits of your life*, unconscious, automatic, comfortable and skillful, these others of necessity are displaced and no longer so. *These* are the things you work on—you don’t work on the put-off, you work on the put-on.

**be kind....** “useful toward others, hence good-natured, good, gentle, kind....”<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> William Barclay, ed., *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press, 1976), 159.

<sup>163</sup> *clamor κραυγή* Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 398.

<sup>164</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 308–309.

<sup>165</sup> *evil speaking βλασφημία* Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 433.

<sup>166</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 309.

<sup>167</sup> *be put away αἴρω* Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 232.

<sup>168</sup> *malice κακία* Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 763.

<sup>169</sup> *be kind χρηστός* Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

*“But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.” (Luke 6:35, NKJV)*

**tenderhearted** or **compassionate**.... “pertaining to being affectionate and compassionate....”<sup>170</sup>

*“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” (1 Peter 3:8–9, NKJV)*

**forgiving**.... “to forgive, on the basis of one’s gracious attitude toward an individual....”<sup>171</sup>

*“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,” (Colossians 2:13, NKJV)*

**even as God in Christ forgave you.**

*“And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” (Luke 7:42, NKJV)*

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<sup>170</sup> *tenderhearted* εὐσπλαγχνος ....Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 293.

<sup>171</sup> *forgiving* χαρίζομαι Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 502.



