

Ephesians

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[0 : 00] Well, I trust we have dealt sufficiently with the subject of the flesh, and we can revisit that or deal with any questions or comments you may have in connection with it.

But we have found need to return to Romans chapter 7 because of what the Apostle Paul has been saying in Ephesians chapter 4.

And I'm thinking in particular now of verse 22 when he said that you put off concerning the former conversation or the former manner of life, the old man, that's the old Adamic nature, which was not improved when you came to faith in Christ.

It's just as rotten to the core as it ever was. But we have been given a new dynamic with which to combat that old sinful nature, and that is in the person of the Spirit of God.

So, Paul tells us that we are to put off. He did not say, now you are to pray and ask God to take that away from you.

[1 : 07] He didn't say that. We are not to pray and ask God to do something that he has already told us to do. That's called passing the buck. So, here we are commanded, and this is in the imperative mood as many of Paul's statements are, we are commanded to put off the former manner of life of the old man.

And that implies, along with the statement, that you and I have the ability to do that. We are not commanded to do something that is beyond us, that we cannot do.

And we are told that it is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man.

This is like a garment, where you take an old garment off, and you put a new garment on. And that's the analogy that he is using here, so as to express the meaning of the picture.

That you put on the new man, which after God, as opposed to after the flesh. This new man is after God, and the flesh is after Adam, the first man.

[2 : 27] Which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. This is the spirit of God that comes to indwell the believer, that takes up residency in our body, and it is created in righteousness.

That new spirit, the new man, is perfect. It is a reflection of Christ within us. And yet, it is subject in a way that I really cannot fully comprehend.

It is subject to the activation of our will, our volition, before the power that is resident in that new man is provided for us.

In other words, God will not make you be spiritual. He has provided us with all of the tools we need to live a spiritual life in Christ, but it is up to us whether or not we will.

That's because our volition remains intact. Wherefore, verse 25, put away lying. Another way that you could state that is, if you were given to stretching the truth and lying, stop it.

[3 : 39] Knock it off. That's basically what he's saying. And that you put away lying. That you no longer have untruth as part of your psyche or part of the way you conduct your life.

Believers in Christ have embraced the one who is the way, the truth, and the life. And we are to be pursuers of truth, lovers of truth, revealers of truth, defenders of truth.

We are to guard the truth. It is our most precious possession. We are to be people who are known for our truthfulness.

And we know that sometimes that's not always so because there are situations that all of us face where it appears to be to our advantage.

It's a lot. The temptation to do so can be overwhelming. Honey, does this dress make me look fat? Be careful where you go with that.

[4 : 49] But you need to be truthful. And sometimes telling the truth can get you into a lot of trouble. And, you know, that's the essence of proclaiming the truth is that you always run the risk of paying a price for doing so.

Joe? That's exactly what you said in follow-up. Because he mentions truth here, you know, that's just one of the sins that you can do. But he mentions it specifically.

Does that kind of mean, if you don't keep the truth, that it will lead to other sins? I mean, it's like the top dog. Oh, yeah. And when it comes down, it starts to lead to lusts and sins of other kinds.

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, it's true. There is someone who said, no one has a good enough memory to be a perfect liar. If you tell a lie, you really have to remember what you said.

But if you tell the truth, you can just forget it. You don't have to remember it, really. Actually, you don't. Because it doesn't change. So, when you tell a lie, very often you'll have to support that with another lie and another lie.

[6 : 07] And when you do the deed and lie about it, and someone has said, sometimes it isn't the deed so much that gets you into so much difficulty. It's the cover-up.

It's the lying about the deed. We have a former president who knows something about cover-up, don't we? Yeah. But there's actions you take later on, too, to cover up that lie.

Oh, yeah. Absolutely. There's actions. What do you actually do to cover up that lie? We've all heard of incidents where one crime has been committed to cover up another crime.

And that's just, it starts, how's that little saying go? How does that go? Oh, what a web we weave.

But what a web we weave when first we practice to deceive. And that's what it generates into, a web. And it's a connected thing. And you've got a lie to back up the other lie.

[7 : 09] And then you've got a lie the third time to back up the second lie. And there's just no end to it. So, we are commanded to be people who are truth-tellers. And we just tell it like it is.

And sometimes, like I said, sometimes that can get you into trouble. Witness a whole spate of prophets in the Bible. And I know virtually every one of them that I can think of without exception, including Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, our Lord Jesus Christ, Stephen the first martyr.

Every one of them paid a price for simply telling the truth. And people do not appreciate being exposed in their sin.

And we are called upon to do that. And we'll see that coming up a little bit later in this passage here.

Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor. For we are members one of another.

And that one another is a phrase that is used so many times in Paul's epistles. And this speaking truth, one with another, carries the connotation that when you lie to your brother in Christ, same thing as lying to yourself.

[8 : 30] Being self-deceiving because of the connection that we have in the body of Christ. We are all members one of another. Be angry and sin not.

Talk just a little bit about that. How that anger is not a sin. There is such a thing as righteous anger. Anger is perfectly okay with God depending on what it is that causes the anger. We ought to always be angry at injustice, at someone being ill-treated.

That ought to cause anger to rise in us. But then, the important point to follow then is how do we handle that anger? What do we do with it?

Anger can be a positive motivator. Anger can lead us to action. Anger can lead us to get off the couch and do something about it rather than just sit there and say, somebody ought to do something, you know?

[9 : 31] Maybe we ought to be that somebody. So, there is an appropriate place for anger when it is righteous anger that is motivated for the right reason. If it is anger that is just something that has boiled up and fumed up in us because we ourselves have personally been wronged, then that's an entirely different issue.

But what we are talking about here is legitimate anger and Paul is saying, be angry. It is okay to get angry. But just make sure that it is a controlled anger and that you do not extrapolate the situation by sinning.

And let not the sun go down on your wrath. This is a good verse for every married couple. You may have your spats and arguments during the day, but they need to be settled by bedtime so that you can give each other that goodnight kiss and really mean it.

And it doesn't have to be that little peck on the cheek either. But you can only do that if the issue has been resolved. And sometimes there needs to be an apology and there needs to be forgiveness extended.

And that's the fun part is in making up. So, we are not to allow the anger to extend overnight. Neither give place to the devil.

[10 : 52] Paul writes in another place where he says, we are not ignorant of his devices. We know how he works. Satan knows all our weaknesses.

And he seeks to exploit them. He knows how to ring our bell. He knows those areas where we are most subject to temptation. And you can be sure that he is adept at bringing it about at the opportune moment for him when he is likely to score.

So, you can give place to the devil. And one way you can do that is by allowing this uncontrolled anger to dominate your life. I remember reading an account by Dr. Henry Brand.

He was a practicing psychologist up in Grand Rapids, Michigan and had obtained quite a reputation for being able to help people. And there were a lot of high-powered executives who were dealing with all kinds of personal issues who would go to him for counseling.

And he said, one time he said this local businessman came in. And he was a very successful man. And he was just a bundle of nerves.

[12 : 03] And he was all agitated and upset and everything. And he was having difficulty sleeping at night. And he couldn't enjoy his meals.

And his life was just a mess. And Dr. Brand says, well, the first thing I want you to do is I want you to go to your family doctor and get a good, thorough medical checkup.

And I don't mean just looking in your ears and listening to your heart. You get a complete physical. The whole works. And when you get the results of that, come back and see me. And what Dr. Brand wanted to do was make sure that there wasn't some physical problem, something that was wrong with the body that was causing all of this problem.

So he went and had the whole battery of tests and x-rays and everything, blood work and all of it. He came back and he said, doctor said he couldn't find anything wrong, that he gave me a clean bill of health.

There's nothing physically wrong with me. And Dr. Brand says, okay. Now, the next question I want to ask you is, who are you mad at?

[13 : 11] What? Who are you mad at? Well, I'm not mad at anybody. Well, now you think about it a little while.

And I've got to make a phone call and I'll be in the other office and you just think about that for a little while. Dr. Brand made his phone call in about 10 minutes. He came back and the guy was sitting there with his head down and he said, any success?

Come up with anything? And he said, well, there are a couple of people who have really gotten to me.

He said, okay, let's talk about it. And as it continued, the truth came out and he said, eventually it was just like a fountain. This guy just flirited out.

And he had been harboring some real animosity, some real bitterness against a couple of former employees that he felt had done him wrong. And he was carrying this grudge and it was eating him alive on the inside.

[14 : 21] He had allowed this injustice, which apparently it was, to get the best of him. And it was literally ruining him from the inside.

He couldn't sleep at night. He couldn't eat his meals. He was cranky with his wife. And finally, as the story goes on, they were able to get things resolved and amends were made.

And the symptoms then, of course, were gone. Because sometimes there is an internal price to be paid when we go for prolonged periods of time carrying a grudge.

Somebody we just won't consider forgiving or someone to whom we owe an apology and we will not give it.

I wouldn't give them the satisfaction of an apology, that kind of thing. And it can just destroy you on the inside. Life is too short to spend it that way. But there are a lot of people who do.

[15 : 24] And this is precisely, I think, what Paul was talking about when he says, Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more. Okay.

Now, maybe you used to lie. And maybe you used to steal. But those things are both out of bounds. You can't do that anymore. Now that you are in Christ, you are to be a person of truth and a person of honesty.

You do not have the liberty to take something that does not belong to you. Another interesting story I remember reading about this bank, an important large bank in a large city, was about to retire their president.

And they were looking for one of the vice presidents who had been there for a while and established themselves to take his place. And it was just kind of a given that out of the three vice presidents they had, one of them would be the next president.

And they were all, before they had this big board meeting and decided these things, they were all meeting in this particular cafeteria nearby the bank. And they were going through the lines with their trays and everything.

[16:39] And the chairman of the board was there. And he was going to have a lot of say in who this next president was going to be. And as they moved along the line with their trays, he just happened to glance over.

And one of those vice presidents, with his plate on the tray, took a couple of pats of butter that had a little three cents each on them.

And he flipped those pats of butter under his plate so that the cashier didn't see them and went on through the line and obviously didn't think a thing about it.

But it was a very deliberate action. He just took his finger, just flipped that one, flipped that one under the plate. Six cents. Six cents.

The chairman of the board noticed that. And he thought to himself, a thief is a thief is a thief.

[17:50] That man would not make a good president of this bank. And he actually held that against him. Because what makes me think that someone who would steal six cents worth of butter wouldn't steal something else from our depositors or from the bank or whatever?

You see, it's just a mindset. It's an attitude. And who knows what kind of petty things this guy had done in the past.

You know, taking home office supplies, et cetera, that belonged to the bank or the institution. These kind of things are almost, they've almost become acceptable in our climate that we've created today.

But the apostle is making clear that it is not accepted. The thief is a thief is a thief. We don't have the ability or the right to do that. Let him that stole steal no more.

Did you have a comment there? Yes, I did. Sometimes to be politically correct is dishonest. Explain. Well, you see something, you don't want to offend somebody.

[18:59] They did something to you. And you say to them, you don't acknowledge it. You say something you really don't mean.

Okay. That's dishonesty. It is dishonesty. And it's not truth-telling. Right. It's not truth-telling. That's carrying it to the other degree. But I think that in our society, it's so many people taint the truth and think nothing else.

Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Dana? I think that's a good question. I think that's a good question. I think that's a good question. I think that's a good question. Political correctness is how things are said. It's not what is said.

So I think if you see something wrong, it's still up to us to speak up and say something about it. But we should say it in a more tactful manner. So it doesn't mean that we don't stay away from subjects. We're not going to go out and offend somebody by calling them a name. Right. If we know an issue, it upsets them. But if it's a serious issue, we need to bring them up to them.

[20:08] Absolutely. And that's not political preference. Absolutely. Well, in Romans 14, the Apostle Paul said that he was confident that we in the body of Christ are able, he said, to admonish one another.

And that literally means hold one another to an account. And yet there's very, very little of that that goes on because, frankly, we're children.

We're afraid to do that. We know, well, I'm not perfect myself. How can I, you know, criticize or come down on somebody else for something they did or something they said?

You know, I've got issues of my own. Well, we all do. But the idea is we have a responsibility as brothers in Christ to hold one another accountable.

If we really see a brother who is engaged in behavior that is unbecoming to Christ and is a poor reflection on the body of Christ, we ought to care enough about him to confront him.

[21 : 23] And so often we're too eager to back off and say, eh, not my job. It's not my business. You know, I don't. I mean, so I know Joe's cheating on his wife.

I know he's seeing this woman on the side. But, hey, that's personal. That's not. Well, is Joe a believer? Oh, yeah, he's in church every Sunday and he knows and loves the Lord. Well, what's the basis for this hanky-pank? And you need to go to Joe and say, Joe, I know what you're doing. It's not right. What's going on here?

What are you doing? How many of us would have the nerve to do that? And what we're talking about is how much do you care about Joe? And would we want someone to call us up short if it were us?

Would you want someone to care enough about you to bring you to task? That's called accountability. And there's precious little of it going on today. But it is something that is to be the norm in the body of Christ.

[22 : 34] This is the way we are to look out for each other. And granted, it's a very delicate thing to do. That doesn't mean we have the right to read somebody out or to tell them off or anything of the kind.

We need to go to them with a humble spirit. And we need to be prayed up when we go. We go to them not as a judge or judgmental or condemning them, but out of genuine, legitimate concern for them and for whoever it is that they are wronging.

Yes. And if the person is not a Christian, we can still go up and ask, is that the right thing to do? And then the answer is, you know, we don't need the answer.

We don't need to judge them. But then thinking about that, then that can make a wound up. Yeah, well, sometimes that can be a basis for, you know, bringing them to a real kind of accountability. But at the same time, we have a responsibility for those who name the name of Christ. And Paul even talked about that when he wrote to the Corinthians.

[23 : 44] He said, for what have I to do with those who are without? And what Paul means is he doesn't have any spiritual jurisdiction over somebody who is not a Christian.

You can't go to a non-Christian and say, this isn't a very Christian thing that you're doing here. Well, he's not a Christian anyway. What do you expect from him? You know, you can't do that.

But still, there can be the loving concern because of what may be going on is damaging and hurtful to everybody. But it needs to be done with great care. And frankly, it calls for the utmost impact and compassion.

They need to know that you are coming to them out of honest, legitimate care for them, not just criticizing them and reading them out. And there's a lot of difference between that.

So, better than stealing, give up the thieving and let him labor, working with his hands, the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

[25 : 00] And most people have never picked up on the concept of this, working with our hands, because most of us tend to think quite automatically that we work with our hands in order to obtain what we want, which namely is money.

So that we can use that money to convert it into things that we want. But the text says that he may have to give to him that needeth. This is true charity in the body of Christ.

This is a community kind of thing. And, you know, we pretty much lost this in the 20th century.

Actually, in the 21st century church, we pretty much lost this because when the apostle was speaking, he was addressing a culture and a society that, for the most part, was real community-oriented.

And the believers that attended a particular church, particular fellowship, all lived within close proximity. And most of them walked to church or horse and buggy or something like that to church. And the whole community was drawn together so that the people were not only in church together on Sunday, but they were rubbing shoulders with each other all week long in their places of business, in the neighborhood, in the community, because everything was really quite localized.

[26 : 28] And today, with transportation being what it is and everybody driving the way they do, it's not unusual at all for people to drive miles to go to church.

And the only time they see those people is Sunday. And they don't have opportunity to interact all week long like they did in the days when Paul was addressing churches here.

So there is a communal kind of camaraderie that is forfeited due to our modern technology and everything that goes with it. People just don't have opportunity and occasion to get as close and be as close with each other as we did a couple of generations ago.

That's just the way it is. And it takes a toll on our whole society because it takes a toll on family relationships, too. Because the old saying, out of sight, out of mind, it has a lot of truth to it.

Joe? Mark, because it says to give to him that needeth. But like you just said, we have a problem determining who needeth. How do we determine who needeth?

[27 : 37] I mean, we read all these stories about how much is taken off of the top, you know, and not given to the one that actually needeth. So I don't want to give to that organization because the person that needeth is not going to get it.

And they just don't know who needeth. A lot of times, unless you have that local connection where you know people and know them, it's tough. And you just don't want to waste your, you don't want to waste it or give it to somebody that doesn't needeth.

Absolutely. How do you determine who needeth? It is a problem. And this comes back, again, Paul is talking primarily about a local church situation. And I don't know how aware of it you are because it's very, very easy in our modern day to become completely unaware of it.

But, in essence, one of the first and foremost concerns that a church congregation was to have was for the material welfare of the people in that congregation.

And that's really brought out in Acts 6 and 7 where they are talking about caring for the needs of the widows. And they were the direct responsibility of an individual congregation.

[28 : 55] Because you've got to keep in mind this was when nothing like Social Security existed. People didn't have savings accounts and things like that like we know of today.

And when a woman lost her husband and became a widow, she became very dependent on that congregation. And the congregation saw meeting her needs as one of their primary responsibilities. And if she didn't have an income, if she didn't have food and rent money or fuel to burn in her furnace or whatever, it was the responsibility of that church to see to it that her needs were cared for.

And that became a top-level responsibility. But that, too, is pretty much lost today because we've got so many other kinds of organizations. We've got United Way and all of this that's kind of lost sight of.

Yes? What about whether it's today or back then or whenever, the person in the congregation that just doesn't work?

[30 : 03] They're lazy. Maybe they're drunker. Yeah, well. Are we responsible to get to them?

There is the accountability factor there, too. If you've got someone in the congregation that is like that, it is the pastor's responsibility or the elder's responsibility to go to that person and say, hey, what's going on here?

You've got people who are unable to work. If they are unable to work, then they become the responsibility of the church.

And today, of course, we've got, you know, we've got government. And so many churches, it's just natural to be willing to back out of anything that could be your responsibility if somebody else will assume it.

It's just a human nature thing. That's just the way it is. And in many respects, in many respects, the church has been kind of robbed of one of its primary responsibilities because government steps in and takes over the task that the church is supposed to take.

And the church is all too willing to let them. And then you've got the problem that you've got a lot of people who are not in the church, but they still have needs. And someone who is unwilling to work, that's a real problem.

[31 : 23] I mean, I don't know if any of you here, some of you here read the book Mayflower, the story about the pilgrims coming over and the difficulty they ran into when they tried to set up their gardens and raising their produce and everything.

So that everybody got a free distribution of everything that was raised. And after a while, they did that for a few years. The incentive of going out and working the land was gone because you were going to get it anyway.

So why should you go out there in the heat of the day and do this or do that? And they soon discovered, hey, this is not working. And it was nothing more than a modified kind of communism.

And communism is that kind of government where everybody is equal, except some are more equal than others. And that's the way that works. So it's a human nature problem is what it is.

And yet the Bible addresses these things. And when Paul writes to the Thessalonians, he takes kind of like a hard-nosed position. He says, if a man won't work, neither shall he eat. If a man can't work, if he's injured, if he's incapacitated, that's different.

[32 : 38] We assume that responsibility. But for somebody who won't work, the sluggard of the book of Proverbs, I can't go out there just early in the morning. How do I know there isn't a lion in the street out there?

I mean, give me a break. And there are people like that. They just will work at finding ways not to work. And Paul said, if he won't work, neither shall he eat.

Don't feed him. And it's amazing what hunger can do to drive somebody to find a job. So, verse 29, Let no corrupt communication, corrupt speech, putrid discourse is the way one renders it, unwholesome words, never let any foul word pass your lips, but that which is good to the use of edifying.

The word edifying comes from the English word edifice, which is a structure. And when you edify someone, you build them up, just like an edifice.

You build them up. You encourage them. It's the opposite of deconstruction. It's the opposite of tearing down. And tearing down people is something that is very easy to do sometimes, but what they really need is built up.

[34 : 05] But that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.

That simply suggests that that is something we can do. We are not given an admonition against doing it if it isn't possible.

And it is possible. We grieve the Spirit of God when we refuse to let Him have His way in our life. When we refuse to submit to Him.

When we insist on going our own way. That is, grieving the Spirit of God. And it is by that same Spirit that we are sealed unto the day of redemption.

We have the seal of God upon us. The seal of the Spirit. And Paul is using that analogy that harkens back to the early Roman days. When Rome put their official seal or stamp on something, that meant it was inviolate.

[35 : 08] And when our Lord was buried in that tomb, and the stone was rolled in front of it, Pilate says, you have a seal.

And that meant that Pilate, as a representative of Rome, was giving the emblem to a Roman soldier, so that when they rolled that stone there, he could take that seal.

Sometimes it was just a signet ring with the seal on it, that they would put on a document. And they would take that seal and stamp it on that stone. And that meant this stone is sealed by the authority of Rome.

Woe be unto anybody who tampers with it. That's a seal that's on official government documents. You'll find a document issued by the state of Ohio has the seal of the state of Ohio on it.

There's a federal seal for the United States, and it authenticates the authority and the power that is behind that document. So, when you came to faith in Jesus Christ, God put His seal upon you.

[36 : 20] The Spirit of God. You belong to Him. You are His property. Why in the world would you want to grieve one like that?

That is your sealing. And that's the opposite of not submitting to the Spirit of God. And later in chapter 5, He's going to be talking about the filling of the Spirit, and that is in keeping with this grieving the Spirit as well.

Mark? Yes? Can you back up to this verse? It's actually 29 and C, or D. Okay. And ahead of that verse, it says that it may minister grace unto the hearth.

This is talking about the communication, what comes out of your mouth, and it says to minister grace. Does that mean that you're going to be, you're talking to them, you're kind of going to overlook what they just said to you?

You're going to forgive them? You're going to give them grace? By forgiving them what they did to you or said to you, therefore I'm not going to retaliate to them in the same way they just did to me?

[37 : 25] I appreciate that, Joe. You're right. It is answering a word of criticism or anger.

A soft answer turns away wrath. And administering grace means that our words are to be words of healing and graciousness.

Tell us, nothing, nothing should characterize grace people more than a spirit and an attitude of graciousness. Nobody should be more gracious to one another or to those without than grace people.

And when you administer grace to someone, you provide a kind of healing balm. You give them something that is good for them. We're not talking about going around flattering people. We're just talking about speaking the truth in sincerity and measuring our words with kindness and a gracious disposition as opposed to the negative things that Paul's talking about here.

And that leads us to let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking all of these things completely contrary to grace.

[38 : 47] Let all of these things put away from you with all malice. That's the grudge without bearing a grudge. Lots of really practical things here before we close out this chapter 4.

And we'll have to pursue this a little more in our next session.