

# Ephesians

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we are actually going to begin with the sheet that we left off with last time. It should be labeled 4E and 4F. If you have that copy, and then we will find it necessary to go to Romans chapter 7 in connection with what we were talking about last week.

So, let's look at our sheet in 4F, if we may, and we'll use that for a jumping off place, and then we will get to this new content in Romans chapter 7.

And Paul is contrasting the Ephesian believers in connection with where they used to be and where they are now.

And this goes back actually to verse 17. Actually, it's 4E and chapter 4 and verse 17 where Paul said, This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God because of the blindness of their heart.

And the reason you are not to walk like them is because you are no longer like them. You are different. You are in Christ now, and that makes all the difference.

[ 1 : 23 ] So, you have no justification for conducting your life in the manner in which you used to do. So, that needs to change. And that's the meaning of that you henceforth, from the time of your conversion onward, those who are not in Christ are locked in to this blindness and this lascivious lifestyle because it's the only sphere in which they operate or can operate.

They are locked into that. But you, in Christ, have been freed from that. And you have a different ability that they do not have.

And this is the meaning in verse 20 under 4F. But you have not so learned Christ. That's the opposite of verse 19.

Speaking of these unbelievers, being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness. That's licentiousness, sensuality.

Philip says they have stifled their consciences and then surrendered themselves to sensuality. New English Bible says they are dead to all feeling.

[ 2 : 42 ] They have abandoned themselves to vice, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you, on the other hand, have not so learned Christ.

Those conducts, unbecoming of them, is not to be characteristic of you because they are not characteristic of Christ. And you are in Christ. You are now walking to a different drummer.

However, you do not have the option of going back into that. If so be, and this is, Paul is saying, I am assuming, of course, that what I am saying about you being in Christ is true.

If so be, that you have heard him and have been taught by him. Have you? Is that the case? This is what he's saying. And if that is true, as the truth is in Jesus, if that is true, then verse 22, that you put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, that is the former manner of life in which you lived and to which you succumbed in your former life as a non-believer.

That isn't where you are now. That's where you used to be. You have no business living where you used to be. You need to come up to where you are now, where Christ is.

[ 4 : 13 ] So you put off concerning the former conversation of the former manner of life, the old man, that's the old Adamic nature. Now, who is he telling to do this?

He's telling these believers to do this. He is not telling them to do something that they cannot do. God does not make unreasonable demands of his people.

We have the capability of this put on and put off. This is an act of your volition. This is an act of your will. You can choose to put on or put off that old manner of life.

The ball is in your court. And I want you to notice very carefully, because this is so critical and germane to this subject of walking in the spirit as opposed to walking in the flesh. Paul is not saying,

Now, what I want you to do, I want you to pray about this.

And ask God to put off the old man for you. Because I know you're too weak to do that. You don't have that capability.

[ 5 : 23 ] No, no, no, no. There isn't any of that. Paul is operating under the assumption that this is something you can do. And you need to do it.

Now, here the volition and the will comes into play. I don't want to get too involved in an extensive and an elaborate exposition of this thing of the volition.

But, fellas, what this amounts to is that when you became a believer in Jesus Christ, you did not surrender your volition.

You did not become devoid of a will that can no longer serve self. The flesh is still with you.

We have no excuse in allowing it to gain the ascendancy of our life. But you can. You may do that.

You are completely unjustified in doing that.

[ 6 : 25 ] This is what Paul means when he writes to the Galatians and says, Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

Fellas, when you came to Christ, the desires of the flesh did not take a hike. They are still there. We still have the capacity to sin.

We still have a capacity to disobey God, to rebel against his authority. We still have the capacity as believers to do wrong, stupid, sinful things.

This is why I have often said, God has no greater asset on this earth than a believer in Jesus Christ who is functioning and walking in the Spirit.

And God has no greater liability in this life than one who claims to be a believer in Jesus Christ and is walking in the flesh. That's what enables people to label Christians as hypocrites.

[ 7 : 29 ] Because we make the profession, but the lifestyle, the attitude, and everything that undergirds that is just marked by the flesh.

And the observation has been made, and it is a sad one, but it is a true one. There are some unbelievers who make no profession of faith in Christ at all, and they haven't been inside a church since the last time they attended a wedding eight years ago, and they live a better, more moral life outwardly than some people who profess to be Christians.

Brethren, these things ought not to be so. But they can be a reality. And just because you are in Christ does not mean you have to walk the Christian walk.

You don't have to. You should. You may. You have no excuse for not doing it. But you can function in the flesh. And that means you fulfill the desires of the flesh as opposed to the Spirit.

And this is something that is a struggle for all of us. And this is why I wanted you to return to the Romans 7 thing, because this is not a plague for every Christian man.

[ 8 : 49 ] It's also a plague for every Christian woman. And it has to do with that war within that is in our members that Paul describes in Romans 7. But let's finish this here in chapter 4 before we go to Romans 7.

So that you put off, verse 22, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lust.

This corruption, guys, you still have in you. This corruption is right at home in you. That's the old Adamic nature.

That's the thing that enables us to sin. And by the way, speaking of corruption, speaking of corruption, we are inundated in this nation with moral, spiritual corruption that is sapping the strength out of this nation.

From the upper echelons to the lower, it is everywhere. It is systemic to humanity. And, you know, one of the most depressing things, I was talking about this to somebody just the other day, one of the most depressing things about this corruption that is killing us, and by the way, no political party has a corner on corruption.

[ 10 : 17 ] They're both well-schooled at it. And the amazing thing about the corruption concept is that those who are actually in a position to address it and do something about it don't even understand the nature of it.

Our nation's leaders, by and large, and of course there are exceptions and we're happy for every one of them, but our nation's leaders, by and large, do not understand that humanity is the problem.

And the problem is the sin factor that is rooted in all of us. But when are you going to hear a politician stand at a public address system and talk about that?

You're not going to hear it. But that's the crux of the problem. And you know something? Our founding fathers, who gave us the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they understood that.

They understood the nature of humanity, and for that precise reason is why they gave us a three-part government, because they knew that no segment of government by itself could be trusted with unlimited power.

[ 11 : 38 ] So they devised a system whereby there are checks and balances with the judiciary, the executive, and the legislative. And God bless them.

That may be the reason this nation has survived as it has, you know? Because that being... But today, by and large, that concept is pretty much lost.

It's rather foreign. And there are only a handful in positions of power and authority that really understand that. And they don't have a great following, unfortunately. So this is where we're at. This corruption in verse 22 is systemic to humanity. It is in every one of us. And the potential for that corruption is there. We are all infected with it.

Someone has said, every human being is infected with a terminal disease. And it's called sin. And we are not to allow it to reign in our mortal bodies.

[ 12 : 38 ] But you can if you choose to. And it makes for a pretty miserable lifestyle for the Christian. But we all know that there are some who operate that way. So, verse 23 says, By way of contrast, be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Good speech says, You must adopt a new attitude of mind. Philip says, And with yourselves mentally and spiritually remade.

What's the basis for that? The basis for it comes from being in Christ. Because in Him we have a new mind. Anyone be in Christ, He's a new creation. Old things have passed away.

Behold, all things have become new. This is what Paul is appealing to here. Being renewed in the spirit of your mind. And that you put on the new man.

That new man. That new nature. That means to be adorned with it. Paul wrote to Titus and said that we are to be, we as believers are to adorn the doctrine of God.

[ 13 : 43 ] That means adorn comes from the word adornment. And clothing. And it means to clothe yourselves. To clothe yourselves in such a way, spiritually, that you make God look good.

That you're a good advertisement for the product. That's what he's talking about here. That's putting on the new man. And, you do that with your will. You do that as an act of personal determination. This is the same will that you exercise when you said yes to Jesus Christ. You became then a believer in him.

And, you realize that by making a deliberate conscious choice to receive Christ as your Savior. And, that is the same will that is being appealed to here.

That you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. This being adorned with this Spirit of God is that which enables you to walk in the Spirit as opposed to walking in the flesh.

[ 14 : 57 ] Because, an unbeliever, an unbeliever is limited to walking in the flesh. That's all he's got. That's all he's got to operate with. And, anything that he does that is good is human good.

It is strictly human good. It is not good that comes from God or that God can accept. It is just human good. But, sometimes an unbeliever with his human good can put a believer to shame by his lifestyle.

And, it ought not so to be. So, verse 25, therefore, putting away lying. Well, I can't do that. Because, lying is my besetting sin. And, I just have to give in to lying because I don't have any choice in the matter. No, that's not true.

You do have. You tell a lie with your volition. You lie because you want to. You lie because it either makes you look good or it keeps you from looking bad.

[ 16 : 07 ] That's why we lie. We tell things that will enhance our person or our purse. Whichever. But, that's why we do it.

And, we are to be people who are characterized by the truth. We are to be lovers of the truth. Protectors of the truth. Seekers after truth.

Purveyors of truth. Guardians of truth. We are to buy the truth and sell it not. We are to be committed to the truth. We are to be willing to pay the ultimate price for the truth.

Fellas, truth is our most precious commodity. Without it, we've got nothing. Putting away lying. Speak every man truth with his neighbor.

Did I see a question or comment somewhere? Pat? Until we're willing to quit lying to ourselves and humble ourselves enough to admit where we are weak and ask for the Holy Spirit's power to change those things, I don't think we can change it in our own strength.

[17:14] Well, there's a lot of wisdom in what you said there about lying to ourselves. Fellas, it is an embarrassing thing to note, but it is coming to reality.

Unfortunately, every one of us, every one of us, without exception, has some con man dwelling within.

And we are often victimized by ourself. We are able to sell ourself a bill of goods.

And that's scary. But it's true. And you know something like Pat said. If you don't recognize that, then you're blindsided by yourself.

We are all our own worst enemy. Not your boss. Not your mate. Not your neighbor. We are all our own worst enemy. That's this terrible, terrible thing called the flesh that enables us to do ugly things.

[18:18] And yet, it is within our power to turn that around. We are the ones who are to put on and put off.

Now, when we get to the Romans 7 thing, and let's, well, let's finish this page first. Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor.

And truth, truth is that which corresponds to reality. A lie corresponds to unreality.

A lie has no basis in truth. And this is something that is so critical and so difficult sometimes to arrive at.

The observation has been made that if we all told each other nothing but the sheer pure truth, we'd probably all be mad at each other all the time.

[19:25] You know? So there's, well, what are we going to do about this? There is a credibility factor.

There is a lack of credibility that is lurching at the door of the heart of every one of us. And if you are willing to be honest with yourself and recognize that, you've got a leg up.

But if you don't even understand or recognize that, that we are our own worst enemy, then you set yourself up for one defeat after another.

And it's just impossible to realize what we are supposed to. Let every man speak truth with his neighbor. For we are members one of another.

And the meaning of that is, look, when you lie to your friend or lie to your neighbor, the same thing as lying to yourself. Because we all belong in the same body.

[20:25] We're all members one of another. And when you mistreat someone else, you're actually mistreating yourself. Because of the corporate nature of the body of Christ, there ought not to be any place where truth is more overwhelming and more in charge than in the body of Christ, than in a local assembly of Christians.

It ought to be a citadel of truth. Where people know that when they walk into this building, whatever, wherever it is or whatever the name of it is, and it's comprised of a group of people who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, all you're going to get when you're there is truth about a whole lot of different things.

And it'll be truth you get from the pulpit, and it'll be truth you get in conversation at the coffee break, and it'll be truth coming and truth going, and nobody's lying to one another. But we all know that the potential for that not being realized is real.

Who can deny it? As the saying goes, Paul said, Let God be true, and every man a liar. And there isn't one of us who hasn't been untrue about some things at some time.

And we are all capable of this. Boy. And be ye angry, and sin not. And that's a neat expression.

[22:00] Anger is not a sin. Misdirected anger is. It is possible to be angry about the right things.

Anger can and should be a motivation to action. You know, in part, and I'm going to close with this because the food is here, but tell us, this is exactly what is taking place in our nation right now.

I'm sure you are aware of it. The statement has been made, and you've heard it come from a number of fronts, that the American people are really sick and tired and fed up.

And they are angry, mad, mad at what's going on and mad at what's not going on in Washington.

And a whole lot of people are really disturbed about this and plan to try to do something about it.

Now, to what extent that's going to be successful? We won't know until Tuesday. And we may not know then. But there's a new wind blowing.

[ 23 : 10 ] And we don't know exactly what this is going to turn out to be, but it has reached crisis proportion.

And I think everybody is pretty much agreed that we are a nation that is at a crossroads. We just don't know which road it's going to take.

But something is going to be a determining factor, and it is very near. It is on the way. And we'll just have to wait and see how this is going to play out.

Anybody thoughts or comments about this? Anybody? Okay. Well, thank you all for being here this morning.