

# Paul's Letter to the *EPHESIANS*

## CHAPTERS 4, 5, 6: *God's Plan for the Church* (the Body of Christ)

### Principles for Faithfulness (4:17 – 5:20)

**4:17-19** So I tell you this, and insist<sup>1</sup> on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility<sup>2</sup> of their thinking<sup>3</sup>. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life<sup>4</sup> of God because of the ignorance<sup>5</sup> that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality<sup>6</sup> so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. [<sup>1</sup>*marturomai*: to announce/ratify as truth, <sup>2</sup>*mataiotes*: vanity, nothingness, <sup>3</sup>*nous*: mental perception and apprehension, <sup>4</sup>*zoe*: principle of life in the spirit and soul, <sup>5</sup>*agnoia*: want of knowledge, <sup>6</sup>*aselgeia*: readiness for all pleasure] Paul discussed traits Christians are to reject <sup>Romans 1:18-32</sup>: the way they “used to live” and the “ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air” <sup>Ephesians 2:1-2</sup>. These behaviors dull man’s “understanding” <sup>2 Corinthians 3:14</sup> and separate him “from ... God” <sup>Ephesians 2:12</sup>.

Paul noted four ungodly lifestyles of the unbelievers: (1) intellectual unproductiveness <sup>v.17</sup> produces a life without meaning <sup>Romans 1:21-23, 1 Corinthians 2:14</sup>; (2) ignorance of God’s truth <sup>v.18</sup> leads to spiritual darkness and moral blindness <sup>Ezekiel 12:2, Matthew 13:15</sup>; (3) moral insensitivity <sup>v.19</sup> arises from ongoing apathy for moral and spiritual conduct <sup>Romans 1:29-32</sup>; and (4) behavioral depravity <sup>v.19</sup> is the consequence of a persistent immoral lifestyle <sup>Isaiah 5:20-21, Romans 1:24-28</sup>.

Followers of Jesus (His “sheep”) hear His voice, but nonbelievers do not <sup>John 10:1-5</sup>, because the “gospel is veiled” to unbelievers, who are “blinded” by the “god of this age”. <sup>2 Corinthians 4:3-6</sup>.

**4:20-21** You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. Next, Paul contrasted the ways of the unregenerate <sup>v. 17-19</sup> with three behaviors which bring mankind into closer relationships with Jesus Christ. Truth is “in” Jesus, but they are in fact equivalent: Jesus = truth <sup>John 14:6, 15:26</sup>.

Paul listed three aspects of salvation: (1) knowing Christ <sup>v.20, Philippians 3:8, 1 John 5:20</sup>, (2) hearing of Christ <sup>v.21, Romans 10:17</sup>, and (3) being taught Christ <sup>v.21, Matthew 28:18-20, John 14:25-26, Acts 2:42</sup>.

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**4:22-24** You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be (made new)<sup>7</sup> in the attitude<sup>8</sup> of your minds; and to put on the new<sup>9</sup> self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness<sup>10</sup>.

[<sup>7</sup>*ananeoo*: to make young, <sup>8</sup>*pneuma*: wind, spirit, <sup>9</sup>*kainos*: qualitatively new,

<sup>10</sup>*hosiotes*: holiness manifested in the discharge of pious duties] Simply stated, salvation is the result of repentance from sin, and brings a new spiritual life<sup>2</sup> Corinthians 5:17. Positionally, a born-again Christian is eternally cleansed<sup>Romans 6:5-7</sup>; however, the practical transformation of earthly life takes effort<sup>Colossians 3:3-8</sup>, because the earthly body is perishable<sup>1</sup> Corinthians 15:50-54 and fallen/frail<sup>Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 7:14-25</sup>. Change will occur when perspectives and focus change in a believer's mind<sup>Romans 12:1-2</sup> from self-centeredness to being "[clothed] with the Lord Jesus Christ"<sup>Romans 13:14</sup>. At physical birth, man is created in God's image<sup>Genesis 1:26-27</sup>; at spiritual birth, Christ is in him<sup>Romans 8:10, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 1:27</sup>.

The transformation (sanctification) of a Christian will surely result in Godly works<sup>Ephesians 2:10</sup>. These works do not produce nor maintain salvation<sup>Ephesians 2:8-9</sup>, but they are God-empowered fruit<sup>John 15:5-8, Galatians 5:22-23</sup> and evidences<sup>2</sup> Timothy 3:16-17, Titus 2:11-14 of salvation<sup>James 2:14-26</sup>.

Paul's phrase "put off your old self" is very reminiscent of the statement made by Jesus "Take off the grave clothes" in reference to His friend Lazarus<sup>John 11:44</sup>, because in both situations someone has just been raised from the dead (spiritual and physical, respectively).

In the following 8 verses, Paul named five sins to be avoided, based on the above principles: (1) lying<sup>v.25</sup>, (2) improper anger<sup>v.26</sup>, (3) stealing<sup>v.28</sup>, (4) corrupt talk<sup>v.29</sup>, (5) bitterness<sup>v.31</sup>.

**4:25** Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak<sup>11</sup> truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. [<sup>11</sup>*laleo*: articulate words as a contrast to silence, mere sounds or animal cries] Lies are not a characteristic of God<sup>Numbers 23:19</sup>, but of Satan<sup>John 8:44</sup> and his followers<sup>Revelation 3:9</sup>. Paul stated "speak truthfully"<sup>Psalms 15:2, Zechariah 8:16</sup>, because God's work on earth through His body<sup>Romans 12:5</sup> is truth-based<sup>John 17:17, Titus 1:1</sup> (Jesus-based<sup>1</sup> John 5:6).

The lying of Ananias & Sapphira was the first sin to be judged in the early church<sup>Acts 5:1-11</sup>.

**4:26-27** "In your anger do not sin<sup>12</sup>": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil<sup>13</sup> a foothold. [<sup>12</sup>*hamartema*: disobedience to a divine law, <sup>13</sup>*diabolos*: accuser] The quote (LXX) from a psalm of David<sup>Psalms 4:4</sup> is not saying all anger is wrong (e.g., the anger of Jesus<sup>Mark 3:5, John 2:13-16</sup>), but to not use anger in an inappropriate way<sup>Matthew 5:22</sup> and

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never for very long <sup>Psalm 30:4-5</sup>. The offer of forgiveness <sup>2 Corinthians 2:10</sup> and returning peace to a situation quickly promotes a better chance to “overcome evil with good” <sup>Romans 12:17-21</sup>.

It is hard for humans to be angry without sinning, because emotions are deceitful <sup>Jeremiah 17:9</sup>, so Christians must “hate evil, love good” <sup>Amos 5:15a, Romans 12:9</sup> and love people <sup>Leviticus 19:18, James 2:8</sup>.

**4:28** He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Stealing in any form is a sin <sup>Exodus 20:15</sup>. A Christian is called to do honest work <sup>Colossians 3:23-24</sup> in order to provide for himself <sup>2 Thessalonians 3:10</sup>, for relatives <sup>1 Timothy 5:8</sup> and for others in need <sup>Acts 20:35</sup>.

John noted stealing is another Satan trait: “The thief comes...to steal...kill...destroy” <sup>John 10:10</sup>.

**4:29** Do not let any unwholesome <sup>14</sup> talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

[<sup>14</sup>*sapros*: worthless (lit)] Corrupt talk is also a sin <sup>Proverbs 18:21, Matthew 12:33-37, Colossians 3:5-8</sup> and a powerful tool of Satan <sup>Revelation 13:5-6</sup>, but offering instructive and encouraging speech is edifying <sup>Proverbs 15:23, 25:11, 1 Corinthians 14:26</sup>, blessing those who hear it <sup>Luke 4:22, Colossians 4:6</sup>.

**4:30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption <sup>15</sup>. [<sup>15</sup>*apolutrosis*: redemption from (lit)] God grieves <sup>Genesis 6:5-7, 1 Thessalonians 5:19</sup> when His children do not take advantage of His blessings and remain trapped in old lifestyles. Once saved by the blood of Jesus, the salvation of a Christian is protected from that time on by the Holy Spirit <sup>2 Corinthians 1:21-22, 5:5, Ephesians 1:13-14</sup> for “the day of redemption” <sup>1 Corinthians 4:5</sup>.

Genuine grief can only be produced within the context of love, whether it is man grieving for man <sup>Deuteronomy 34:7-8, 2 Samuel 1:25-26</sup> or God grieving for man <sup>Psalm 78:40-41, Isaiah 63:7-10, Ezekiel 6:8-9</sup>.

**4:31-32** Get rid of all bitterness, rage <sup>16</sup> and anger, brawling and slander <sup>17</sup>, along with every form of malice <sup>18</sup>. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. [<sup>16</sup>*thumos*: outburst of anger, <sup>17</sup>*blasphemia*: blasphemy, abuse against someone, <sup>18</sup>*kakia*: wickedness as an evil habit of the mind] Paul summarized the changes <sup>v.22-30</sup> in a believer's life: there are behaviors to eliminate <sup>Colossians 3:5-8, 1 Peter 2:1</sup> and there are behaviors to emphasize <sup>Philippians 4:8-9, 1 Peter 3:8</sup>, with forgiveness being paramount <sup>Matthew 6:14-15, 18:21-35</sup>.

Bible study is very important to Christian growth, but the Bible demands more: obedience.

In fact, Jesus proclaimed that obedience to His Word is the proof of love for Him <sup>John 14:15</sup>.

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