

Ephesians

Lesson Fourteen Behavior in the Church

4:17-32

Introduction:

1. Paul taught the revelation of the mystery of the ages – the importance of the church as God's eternal purpose.
2. By understanding the church, the Ephesians should have been motivated to maintain unity among themselves within the body.
3. Thus, they would use their miraculous abilities and natural talents to build up and edify the church through the revelation and teaching of truth.
4. Yet, to show their love for God and His church, and to keep unity in the congregation, they had to learn to behave as Christians in their everyday lives.
5. Thus, Paul began to focus on the behavior of a member of the Lord's church.

4:17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind

- A. This passage picks up the discourse from verses 1-3 concerning the worthy walk.
- B. The words of Paul were given by the inspiration of the Lord.
 1. To testify is to speak as a witness; thus, to make a solemn appeal.
 2. Paul's testimony was "in the Lord," meaning that he was inspired of God.
 3. So, the following instructions are not mere suggestions, but commands of God.
- C. Since they had become Christians, they were to live no longer like the world.
 1. Many of the converts at Ephesus had come from a Gentile background.
 2. Though they were still Gentiles by blood, they had become Christians.
 3. Thus, they were not to behave like "other" Gentiles – those who were not followers of Jesus.
- D. Those Gentiles who were not Christians lived "in the vanity of their mind."
 1. The Greek word for 'vanity' means, "devoid of truth; depravity, or perverse."
 2. It comes from a root word that means, "Empty or without profit."
 3. This word was used of idols; for, there was no true value in them.
 4. All religion without Christ is vain and without profit.

4:18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart

- A. Furthermore, their moral understanding was darkened because it was obscured from the truth of God's Word.
 1. They were unenlightened by the Gospel.
 2. So, they continued in the dark depravity of idolatry.
- B. Because they did not know or accept the Truth, they were alienated – "estranged, non-participants" – from true, spiritual life found in God.
 1. The word for 'ignorance' means, "Lack of knowledge."
 2. It is from this Greek word that we get the word *agnostic*.

- C. Without the light of God's Word, they were left to walk with blinded minds.
 - 1. The Greek word for 'blindness' actually means, "Callousness, the covering with a callus; thus, dulled perception."
 - 2. It refers to one who stubbornly refuses to see because his heart has been hardened.

4:19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness

- A. Thus, Paul described them as "being past feeling" – literally, "apathetic."
 - 1. This word means, "To cease to feel pain or grief."
 - 2. They no longer felt any shame, grief, or pain of conscience over their sins.
- B. So, they gave themselves over to sin.
 - 1. This Greek word means, "To surrender; to give into the hands of another; to deliver up to prison or judgment."
 - 2. So, they had willfully allowed themselves to become enslaved to sin.
- C. Lasciviousness is "unbridled lust, excess, shamelessness."
 - 1. Its use in Scripture helps to illustrate its meaning (Mark 7:22; Romans 13:13; 2 Corinthians 12:21; 1 Peter 4:3; 2 Peter 2:7, 18; Jude 4).
 - 2. Thus, this word has been defined as, "Absence of restraint" or "insatiable desire for pleasure."
 - 3. This is the motto of the world: *If it feels good, do it.*
 - 4. Or, "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die" (1 Corinthians 15:32).
- D. Their licentious attitude caused them to choose sin as their occupation.
 - 1. To them, their job was do anything and everything that was unclean.
 - 2. Like some who become obsessed with work because of greed, they became obsessed with sin because of their never-ending desire for more.

4:20-21 But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus

- A. That is the thinking of the world, but it is not learned from the Lord.
- B. The Gospel of Christ does not teach man to live this way; instead, it seeks to free man from the power and condemnation of sin.
- C. Jesus is the source of Truth and that Truth is revealed in the Gospel.
- D. The Ephesians had hear Jesus and had been taught by Him; however, Jesus was in Heaven at the right hand of God when they became Christians.
 - 1. The preaching of Paul (and other inspired teachers) was the Word of God.
 - 2. When they heard Paul, they heard the Lord!
 - 3. When we read the New Testament, we are reading the very words of the Lord Himself.

4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts

- A. The Lord teaches man to put away or cast aside the way of life one followed before learning the truth of the Gospel.
- B. Living a life deluded by the lusts of the flesh leads to corruption – both physical and spiritual (cf. Romans 6:6, 12-23; Titus 3:3; Hebrews 3:13; etc.).
- C. The Christians at Ephesus had given up idolatry; thus, they must make sure they gave up the lifestyle that went along with it.

4:23-24 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness

- A. After putting off the old man – their old way of life – the Ephesians were to put on the new man – a new way of living.
 - 1. Biblically, it is never enough just to stop practicing sin.
 - 2. Bad works must be replaced with good (cf. Matthew 12:43-45).
- B. A new lifestyle begins with a new way of thinking, a renewed mind
 - 1. To renew means, “To regenerate, to make youthful; to renovate or reform.”
 - 2. This renewal of the mind begins in conversion.
 - a. The Word of God creates faith in the mind of man (Romans 10:17).
 - b. The Word joined with faith leads to a new understanding of and attitude toward sin – repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10).
 - c. Continued exposure to the Word (with a faithful, penitent heart) leads to confession of faith in Jesus (Acts 8:37).
 - d. Finally, a submissive will leads to obedience – baptism for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5; etc.).
 - e. As a result, a new birth has taken place (John 3:3-5), a new creation has been made (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15), and a new life has begun (Romans 6:4).
 - 3. However, a Christian must continue to renew his or her mind.
 - a. We must have continual exposure to the Word of God.
 - b. We must continue to nourish, sustain and grow our faith.
 - c. We must keep a right attitude toward sin and a penitent heart.
 - d. We must desire to confess Christ in word and deed.
 - e. We must remain submissive and obedient to the Lord.
 - 4. The devil, through the deceitfulness of sin, continually tries to lure the Christian back to the former lifestyle of the “old man.”
 - 5. Thus, the child of God must make sure that the mind (will and intellect) remain renewed (Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 18:31; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Colossians 3:10).
- C. After the mind is renewed, one must begin to live like a “new man.”
 - 1. The old man was a follower of Satan, corrupt and deceived.
 - 2. The new man is a follower of God, righteous and informed by truth.
 - a. Righteousness is being justified from sin – right with God.
 - b. True holiness stands in opposition to “deceitful lusts” and refers to “holiness of truth” (ASV).
- D. Now, Paul begins to describe what it looks like to put off the old man and to put on the new man.

4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another

- A. To put off the old man, one must put away lying.
 - 1. The word for “lying” means, “Falsehood,” and it is used 9 times in the New Testament (John 8:44; Romans 1:25; 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 11; 1 John 2:21, 27; Revelation 21:27; 22:15).
 - 2. Christians are not to be deceived by the tricks of Satan, nor by the lusts of the flesh.
 - 3. Furthermore, they must not be deceptive – for only Truth can free men.

- B. To put on the new man, one must speak truth with his neighbor.
 - 1. Christians are to be honest in their talk – with everyone (cf. Psalm 15; Proverbs 12:17; 2 Corinthians 7:14; etc.).
 - 2. This is especially true when it comes to teaching the Word of God (4:15).
 - 3. Remember, all men are our neighbors (cf. Luke 10:29ff).
- C. The “Golden Rule” motivates honesty, for we are members one of another.
 - 1. Society is held together by honesty in the affairs of men.
 - 2. Neighborhoods and communities flourish when honesty is present.
 - 3. Families are strengthened by honesty among the household members.
 - 4. As a body, the church depends upon the honesty of its members to maintain unity.

4:26-27 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil

- A. To put off the old man, one must not let anger lead to sin.
- B. Note that this verse does not command anger; but, it teaches that it is not a sin to be angry.
 - 1. The Greek word for ‘angry’ means, “To provoke, enrage; to become exasperated with.”
 - a. This word is found only 8 times in the New Testament (Matthew 5:22; 18:34; 22:7; Luke 14:21; 15:28; Revelation 11:18; 12:17).
 - b. In some instances the anger is justified, while in others it is not.
 - c. In Matthew 5:22, the anger produces the danger of judgment; but, when it is acted upon, the condemnation becomes much more severe.
 - d. In Matthew 18:34; 22:7; and Luke 14:21, the anger led to righteous actions.
 - e. However, in Luke 15:28, the anger led to sinful actions.
 - 2. The root word for ‘angry’ means, “Violent passion, desire of the mind; temper, indignation; agitation of the soul.”
 - a. This word usually refers to the wrath of God (cf. Mark 3:5; Luke 3:7).
 - b. Men must be careful with this emotion (Eph. 4:31; James 1:19-20).
 - 3. Anger is a natural emotion that all men feel from time to time – all are capable of being provoked.
 - 4. However, the Christian must control anger (and all other emotions) instead of allowing it to control him or her.
- C. The old man would allow anger to fester and cause hatred, disunity, and sinful actions.
- D. The new man will not allow the sun to go down upon wrath.
 - 1. This means that the Christian does not cherish or nurture anger in the heart.
 - 2. This is a proverbial statement indicating the need of removing anger from one’s heart and mind.
 - 3. As the heat of the day wanes with the setting of the sun, so must one’s anger diminish before it becomes sin.
 - 4. However, it is also a good principle to apply literally.
 - 5. The setting of the sun was the time of evening prayer, which could be hindered by an angry heart.
- E. By holding on the anger, one opens his heart to the devil, allowing him a place.
 - 1. Anger is a doorway to temptation and sin.
 - 2. Satan can use this to draw the Christian back to the old way of life.

- F. It should be noted that this passage is a quotation from Psalm 4:4.
1. It is quoted from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT.
 2. The phrase “stand in awe” comes from a Hebrew word that means, “To tremble with any violent emotion.”
 3. Thus, it can refer to awe, fear, anger or rage.
 4. By communing with one’s heart upon the bed, anger will be removed and the sun will not go down upon one’s wrath.

4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth

- A. To put off the old man, one must put away stealing.
1. The Greek word for “steal” is *klepto* (κλεπτω), from which we get the word ‘kleptomaniac.’
 2. “Thou shalt not steal” was one of the Ten Commandments (Exo. 20:15).
 3. The attitude that leads to robbery is also condemned, covetousness (Exo. 20:17; Eph. 5:5; etc.).
 4. Stealing is wrong because it shows a lack of faith in God (Prov. 30:8-9).
 5. Stealing is wrong because it shows a lack of love for man (Lev. 19:11).
 6. There are many different ways to steal from another.
 - a. Robbery, burglary, shoplifting, etc.
 - b. Fraud, embezzlement, gambling, etc. (cf. John 12:6)
 - c. Cheating, slander, gossip, etc.
 - d. Spiritually (John 10:1, 10)
- B. To put on the new man, one must labor and give.
1. The Bible teaches that man is to earn his living by work (Gen. 3:19; Prov. 13:11; 14:23; 1 Thes. 4:11-12; 2 Thes. 3:10-12).
 2. First, this is to provide for himself and his family (1 Tim. 5:8, 16).
 3. Then, it is to be able to help others who are in need (1 Tim. 6:17-18).
- C. Again, the practice of sin must be replaced by the practice of righteousness.

4:29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers

- A. To put off the old man, one must cease corrupt communication.
1. The word for ‘corrupt’ means, “Rotten or worthless.”
 2. Many things could be classified as “corrupt communication.”
 - a. Filthiness (Eph. 5:3) – *obscenity, shameful*
 - b. Foolishness (Eph. 5:3) – *stupid, heedless, absurd speech*
 - c. Jestings (Eph. 5:3) – *ribald, low, vulgar wit*
 - d. Flattery (Psa. 5:9; Pro. 29:5) – *smooth, deceptive compliments*
 - e. Deceit (Rom. 3:13)
 - f. Cursing (Rom. 3:14) – *wish for evil upon another*
 - g. Bitterness (Rom. 3:14) – *words of hatred and wickedness*
 - h. Blasphemy (Col. 3:8-9) – *vilification of that which is holy*
 - i. Error (2 Pet. 2:18)
 3. Remember, the very words of man will be judged (Matt. 12:36-37).
- B. To put on the new man, one must speak good things that edify.
1. The desire of the Christian should be to communicate things to others that will help them get to Heaven (cf. Col. 4:6).
 2. We must become encouragers and edifiers that others may find grace.

4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption

- A. The Holy Spirit is grieved when man rejects His word, rebels against God, and continues in sin (cf. Isaiah 63:10).
 - 1. The word 'grieve' means, "To distress, make sorrowful, or cause grief."
 - 2. God is grieved when man rejects Him (Genesis 6:3, 6; Psalm 78:40; 95:10; Isaiah 7:3; 43:24; Mark 3:5; Acts 7:51; Hebrews 3:10, 17).
- B. When one who has become a Christian continues living like the "old man," God is grieved.
- C. Remember that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit by having the confirmed revelation of His truth (cf. 1:13).
- D. If we reject that truth – by disobedience and sin – we reject our seal of confirmation.

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

- A. To put off the old man, these other destructive attitudes must be changed.
- B. **Bitterness** is a hateful and wicked attitude that leads to cruel words and actions.
- C. **Wrath** is a hot, passionate anger (boiling up) that leads to sinful deeds.
- D. **Anger** is an agitation of the soul that desires punishment or suffering for others.
- E. **Clamor** is the outward manifestation of wrath and anger – *screaming, yelling, brawling, etc.*
- F. **Evil speaking** is blasphemy or slander against God or others.
- G. **Malice** is ill-will toward others, "wickedness that is not ashamed to break laws."

4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you

- A. To put on the new man, new attitudes must be developed and matured.
- B. **To be kind** is to do that which is fit, useful, good, or pleasant to others.
- C. **To be tenderhearted** is to be compassionate and sympathetic toward others.
- D. **To be forgiving** is to be willing to pardon or grant favor to another.
- E. All of these attitudes require us to deny self and put ourselves in the place of another.
 - 1. To be kind, we must consider what is best for others.
 - 2. To be tenderhearted, we must consider what another is enduring.
 - 3. To be forgiving, we must consider what another truly needs.
 - 4. All of these require the practice of the Golden Rule (Matthew
- F. Furthermore, they require us to remember what God has done for us.
 - 1. God was kind, tenderhearted and forgiving to us – even when we were sinners and enemies.
 - 2. God forgave us, even though it cost the life of His Son.
 - 3. The Lord continues to forgive us, even though we are undeserving.
- G. Will we put on the new man and treat one another the way God has treated us?