

## Where The Rubber Meets The Road (Part 1) – Eph 4:25-32

Eph 4:25-32. We've talked about how to grow up and how to live for Christ in previous weeks; now it's time to get specific and apply it. That's the idea in *this* passage. Having been taught to put off the old self and put on the new, from v17-24, Paul gets specific. Specific about what that means in everyday *life*, where the rubber meets the road.

It's like putting new tires on your car. It's one thing to think about and do, it's another to actually drive. That's where the rubber meets the road. Having put off our old nature and put on the new, this passage is driving; putting it into practice. With no less than 7 commands. 3 this week, from v25-27; and 4 next week. Take a look.

[25] *Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.* [26] *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,* [27] *and give no opportunity to the devil.* [28] *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.* (ESV) Let's stop there.

*Having put away falsehood* [v25], having dispensed with the *wrong* thinking associated with your old self and the world; and having been clothed with robes of righteousness belonging to your new self; *therefore* [he says], *let each one of you* . . .

### Be a **truth** speaker (v25)

That's the idea. The first command. V25. *Let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor*. Let each one of you be a truth speaker.

It's the very thing God said to his people of old in **Zech 8:16-17**. Speaking of the coming age, the age in which we're in, he says:

*These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates [your gathering places] judgments [decisions] that are true and make for peace; [17] do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath [false promise], for all these things I hate, declares the LORD."*

It's the extended version of Paul's statement in Ephesians. The bottom line being: be a truth speaker. Having put away falsehood, having put away *half-truths*, having put away lies; don't just *believe* the truth, speak it. And not just to the walls or the air as you're driving down the road by yourself. Speak it to your neighbor. The *people* in your life; your circle of influence.\*\*\*\*\*

➤ Easier said than done these days, isn't it? Especially in the face of so many cultural pressures to toe the line of popular narratives. And the threat of being "cancelled" if you don't. You see it in Hollywood, you see it in politics, you see it in schools, and you see it in the workplace. From corporate bias training to gender sensitivity instruction. Insisting that you admit something false about yourself, or set aside *biblical* values in favor of *cultural* ones.

Or how about pronoun indoctrination? Requiring you to use or not use certain pronouns based on a person's gender preference. Regardless of whether it matches their *actual* gender. Even saying *that* is counter-cultural and cancel worthy.

Fail to toe the line, and you're marginalized. Speak the *truth*, and you're blacklisted; maybe even fired. And yet to the extent we don't, to the extent we remain silent, we *perpetuate* the falsehoods, and live by lies.

➤ But for most of us, those things haven't happened yet. *Closer* to home, is being a truth speaker to *each other*. As brothers and sisters in Christ in God's family. Look at v25 again. *Having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.*

The primary audience Paul is addressing, is the church. Us. Followers of Christ. And there are 2 reasons we should be truth speakers to one another. Implied by the last phrase – *we are members one of another*.

The first, is that . . .

#### • **It's the loving thing to do.**

As mutual members of the same body, speaking the truth to one another is loving one another. Because truth contributes to our sanctification, our Christlikeness. Truth clarifies. Truth sets us free. Truth assures. Truth increases conviction.

Which means withholding it from each other is one of the most *unloving* things we can do. Even when it's hard to say and hard to hear. That's the first reason we should be truth speakers.

The second, is that . . .

#### • **It's what families do.**

Be a truth speaker, because that's what families *do*. At least healthy, functional families. They speak the truth to each other. Not just pleasantries, or half-truths. And certainly not lies. Telling one another only what they want to hear.

Becky and I received a dose of this recently in our *immediate* family. She was talking on the phone with one of our daughters, and somehow the topic of competitiveness, and intensity, and bickering came up while playing *games*. And our daughter, very gently but very clearly, said, "You and Dad are like that these days. And we don't like to play with you because of it."

Truth hurts sometimes. But that's usually when it's the most helpful. And without it, we're not really family.

➤ Now, does that mean we should go around with a hammer, looking to drop it on anyone we can? No. Nor does it mean you're the one to *speak* the truth all the time. There may be someone else *better* suited. Someone from whom it would be better *received*.

But if you're the one, say something. *Speak the truth with* [your] *neighbor*. It's what families do. And it's the *loving* thing to do.

That's the first way the rubber meets the road as we put off our old nature and put on the new.

The second, is . . .

## **Watch your anger (v26-27)**

V26-27. *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, [27] and give no opportunity to the devil.* I say *watch* your anger, as opposed to *avoid* all anger, because not all anger is wrong. *Be angry and do not sin* implies that some anger is right. There might be good *cause* for anger; things we should be angry *about*.

Like the hard heart of the Pharisees when Jesus was in the synagogue; Mark 3. A man with a withered hand was present, and they didn't think Jesus should heal him because it was the Sabbath. (Mk 3:5) *And he looked around at them [it says] with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart.* Was that sinful on Jesus' part? No. Because Heb 4:15 says he was *without sin*.

Or how about when he entered the temple during the Passover and cleared it with a whip. Overturning tables and throwing people out. (Jn 2:13-17) Sounds pretty angry. For good reason. The place of worship was being desecrated.\*\*\*\*\*

So the phrase *be angry and do not sin* implies that not all anger is wrong. And the example of Jesus proves it. Sometimes it's warranted. Like in the face of blatant wrong or blatant sin.

But we *must* be careful. We must watch it. For 5 reasons. First . . .

### **1. It escalates quickly.**

Not only is that our common experience, but that's what James implies when he says – *Let every person be . . . slow to anger*. James 1:19. Because he well knows that it escalates *quickly* if we don't watch it. Giving very little time to ensure that it's righteous.

### **2. It tends to come out.**

And that's not *God's* intent. His intent is that we *withhold* most of our anger. Just like he withholds most of his. Think about it. With respect to your sin.

Not only that, but **Ps 4:4** says – *Be angry, and do not sin [sound familiar?]; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent*.

There's a *place* for the expression of anger, but most of the time we should keep it to ourselves. And take it to the Lord in prayer. That's the *main* outlet for our anger. Found all *over* the Psalms.

Like **Ps 74:10-11**. *How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever? [11] Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the fold of your garment and destroy them!*

That's taking your anger to God in prayer. And the best way to withhold it from others; to be silent and ponder it in your heart. (Ps 4:4)\*\*\*\*\* Not that you can't express it to another brother or sister in *Christ*; to help you evaluate it and process it. But that you should go to God first, and most of the time keep it to yourself.

Third, watch your anger because . . .

### **3. It's often unrighteous.**

There's a place for *righteous* anger, but if we're honest, most of our anger is unrighteous. Most of the time we're angry because we're personally offended and think too highly of

ourselves. "How could they say such a thing. To *me* of all people." Or maybe it's because your spouse didn't do something you *wanted*; or the *way* you wanted it.

Anger for personal offenses or preferences is not righteous. Just like *God's* love and mercy holds sway, so should ours.

### **4. It likes to linger.**

I think that's one of the reasons Paul says in v26 – *Do not let the sun go down on your anger*. As in, don't let it linger. Don't let it hang around. If you do, it will embed itself in the soil of your heart, and grow a bitter root that entangles itself like the tentacles of tumor. Not a great picture. But that's exactly what happens in the depths of our soul when we allow our anger to linger.

You know where the rubber meets the road in this? Marriage. Going to bed mad. Don't go to bed mad. Make a commitment with each other and stick with it. Because all you do is wake *up* mad. Sometimes madder. Because your anger has lingered, and taken root, and hardened your heart.

Becky and I have had many a late night because of that commitment, and it has spared us from growing cold toward one another. Or worse. You don't have to fully *resolve* the issue, but you can't be mad at each other.

5<sup>th</sup>, watch your anger because . . .

### **5. It exposes you to attack.**

V27. *Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil*. Allowing your anger to linger opens you up to demonic influence. Satanic attack. Because you give the devil an opportunity to exploit your weaknesses, and carry out his evil intent in your life.

Not that God abandons you. Or that Satan can take over and *possess* you as a child of God. But that he can *oppress* you. Afflict you. Subject you to stresses and temptations and experiences, that under normal circumstances wouldn't even phase you. But in the grip of anger they open the door to anxiety, fear, and even more sin. Satan's favorite tools.

Don't be a tool. Watch your anger and take it to the Lord in prayer. That's the second way the rubber meets the road.

Third, and last, is . . .

### **Work hard (v28)**

V28. *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.* Paul directs his command to thieves, but the principles apply to all of us. Certainly Paul wouldn't expect a *lower* standard from law-abiding believers.

And it starts with hard work. Or *labor* as he says it. *Let him labor*. As in toil. Put forth effort. Strive at something. That's the core of this. We ought to work *hard* as maturing followers of Christ. We ought to work *hard* as people with a new nature. Work *hard* as someone with a renewed mind.

Which goes to show that our salvation is not just theoretical or theological. It's practical. Right down to how we conduct ourselves on the job. We ought to be the most diligent employees on the planet. Or employ-ers. Constantly at our work, constantly improving, constantly adding value, and constantly going above and beyond.

➤ Not only that, but we ought to work *with integrity*. First phrase of v28 – *let the thief no longer steal* it says. Neither things *nor* time. You may not steal *things* from your employer, but do you steal *time*? Taking care of *personal* matters when you should be taking care of business?

Work with integrity, and work *at something legitimate*; something helpful. *Labor doing honest work* it says. Work that's on the up and up. Work that *contributes* to society. Work that *helps* people.

And then there's the fact that we should work with *others* in mind. Last phrase of v28. Work hard, *so that [you] may have something to share with anyone in need*.

Work hard with integrity, work hard at something legitimate, and work hard with *others* in mind. Including your family. Which leads us to the first of 4 main *reasons* in the Bible to work hard.

➤ The first, is . . .

### **1. To provide for yourself and your family**

1 Tim 5:8 says – *If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever*. Work hard to provide for your family.

Second, work hard . . .

### **2. To help others in need**

Straight from v28 again. *Labor . . . so that [you] may have something to share with anyone in need*. Whether they're *chronically* poor, and or just need help in a crisis. Work hard, so you can help others in hard times.

### **3. To provide for the work of ministry**

That's the whole idea of tithing. Giving a tenth of our income to our church. The place and base of ministry. **Mal 3:10** – *Bring the full tithes [meaning a tenth] into the storehouse [God says] that there may be food in my house*. Spiritual food. The fruit of ministry.\*\*\*\*\*

Our work provides the tithes, our tithes provide for ministry, and ministry provides the food. Spiritual food to grow and go.

And then 4<sup>th</sup>, the 4<sup>th</sup> reason to work hard, is . . .

### **4. To promote the common good**

The common *good* referring to the well-being of our nation, supported and advanced by our taxes. Which were affirmed by Jesus when he said, "*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's*". (Mk 12:17) We work to pay taxes, and pay taxes to promote the common the good.

4 reasons to work hard. Leaving no room for laziness. (Summary)

That's where the rubber meets the road in our journey with Christ. Be a truth speaker, watch your anger, and work hard.

Prayer – Lord, affirm these truths in our mind and heart. And give us all we need to carry them out: the courage to speak the truth, the discipline to watch our anger, and the strength to work hard. And be magnified as you do. Be magnified at the altar of our life, where the rubber meets the road.