

Ephesians

Chapter 4

The Humble Walk - Ephesians 4:1-6

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

As in most of Paul's epistles to individual churches, we now get to the practical section of Ephesians. Having laid the great theological foundation of the doctrine of the Church, Paul now turns to the results that should be the fruit of that knowledge. Unlike many preachers and teachers today, who shy away from doctrine and theology, Paul saw it as a necessary foundation to practical living. We are to act a certain way because we have a knowledge of why we are to act that way.

The Contrast of Ephesians 1-3 with 4-5¹

Doctrine to Duty

Creed to Conduct

Wealth to Walk

Exposition to Exhortation

Indicative to the Imperative

High Society to High Life

In these first six verses we find the character of a worthy walk. We are first called to the worthy walk in verse one. Next, we find the characteristics of that worthy walk in verses two to three, and then we find the cause of that worthy walk in verses four to six.

The Call To Walk Worthy - Ephesians 4:1

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Because of the great truths that we have learned in the first half of Ephesians regarding our high calling (Ephesians 1:3-14), our unity in one body (Ephesians 2:11ff), our salvation by God's grace (Ephesians 2:1-10), and our great resources in Christ (Ephesians 3), we are called to walk worthy. The word for worthy, *axios*, refers to weight. It was used in commercial transactions of

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991), p. 121.

the day to refer to the process of weighing something so as to have equal weights.² Paul is telling us to walk in such a manner as to be in balance with what we are in Christ.

The concept of walk, *peripateo*, refers to the manner of one's life. It includes conduct, attitudes, and values which characterize a world-view. As believers, our manner of life should match what we are in Christ. When we walk as the world, we betray our allegiance to the one who has redeemed us from the world in order to present us before him holy and blameless. Furthermore, the Bible is full of warnings to those who consistently live like the world to examine their salvation to see if it is real. The entire book of 1 John is a call to believers to walk in the light, obey Christ's commandments, love other brethren, and exhibit character in keeping with that of true believers. John warns his readers over and over again that those who do not practice a godly walk as a manner of life have no right to consider themselves true believers.

Walk in Ephesians

1. We are to walk in good works as we are God's workmanship - Ephesians 2:10.
2. We are to walk worthy of our calling as believers - Ephesians 4:1.
3. We are to not walk as other Gentiles walk - Ephesians 4:17.
4. We are to walk in love - Ephesians 5:2.
5. We are to walk in the light - Ephesians 5:8.
6. We are to walk as wise and not fools - Ephesians 5:15.

Vocation, *klesis*, refers to the effectual call to salvation.³ This is in distinction to the general call to salvation as embodied in the "whosoever wills" of the New Testament. We have been effectually called by God to salvation, and as a result our life needs to be lived in such a way that it is balanced with what we truly are in Christ.

The Character of a Worthy Walk - Ephesians 4:2-3

*With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love
Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Having exhorted us to walk worthy, Paul now describes the characteristics of the worthy walk. God never asks us to do something that he does not explain to us or gives us the power to do. God's command is God's enabling.

Lowliness

The first characteristic of the worthy walk is lowliness. The word used is *tapeinophrosune*. It is a compound word made up of *tepeinos*, low, and *phroneo*, to think, thus, to think lowly. Furthermore, it is a word that is not found in secular Greek literature and hence is most likely a term coined by the early believers.⁴ The Greeks and Romans of Paul's day looked down on anyone that would exhibit humble behavior. Seneca, the great Roman, said that one of the

² Hughes, p. 121.

³ John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 119.

⁴ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 120.

greatest character qualities was to immediately and forcefully strike back against anyone who would embarrass or insult oneself.

The concept behind lowliness is that of thinking rightly about oneself. The root of most sin is pride or an exaltation of self. The one who can think lowly is one who is willing to consider the needs and desires of others over ones own needs and desires. In fact, the Bible has a lot to say about pride. Pride was the cause of Satan's fall (Isaiah 14:12-15). Proverbs warns us that "pride goeth before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18), and lists pride among those things the Lord hates (Proverbs 6:16-19). James tells us that "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:7), and Peter exhort us to "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6). The message is clear. Those who are true believers should give no place to a high view of self apart from Christ.

Elements of Humility⁵

1. A proper self-awareness by which a man sees his own unworthiness.
2. A Christ-awareness in which one sees the perfection of Christ.
3. A God-awareness in which one sees the incomparable glory of God.

Meekness

Meekness, *praotes*, refers to a gentle spirit. It is the characteristic of one who has power under control. This word was used in secular Greek literature to refer to a horse or wild animal that had been tamed.⁶

A meek person is not someone who is a doormat for others, but someone who is able to take mistreatment and offenses with a charitable spirit. Christ displayed meekness when he was "reviled, and reviled not again" (1 Peter 2:23). Moses exhibited meekness when he refused to get even with those who spoke against him. Although a meek person will gladly accept the mistreatment of others, a meek person will become enraged against the dishonor that others do to God. Christ was meek, nevertheless he chased the moneychangers out of the temple with a whip. Moses was meek, but when God's honor was at stake he became bold in his defense of God's character.

Longsuffering

Longsuffering, *makrothumeia*, is a compound word made up of *makro*, long, and *thumos*, anger. A longsuffering person is one who takes a long time to get angry. They have the ability to suffer adverse circumstances and people without losing their cool.

One of the greatest characteristics of God is his longsuffering. Peter tells us in 2 Peter 3:8 that "God is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish." God puts up with man's rebellion and sin for a long time before moving in judgment. Some accuse God of being fickle because he does not immediately judge sin, not realizing that if God was not longsuffering every man would have been blasted into hell the moment they committed their first sin. God is a patient and longsuffering God, giving men time to repent. Only when men continue to rebel and flaunt their sin in God's sight does God eventually move in fierce wrath and anger against the one who despises his goodness and patience (Romans 2:4).

⁵ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 123-24.

⁶ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 124-25.

Forbearance

A fourth characteristic of the worthy walk is forbearance. The idea behind this word is that of “putting up with.”⁷ It is the character quality which accepts the idiosyncrasies of personality which characterize other believers. As Christians, we need to lovingly forbear one another’s individuality where there is no sin involved. When we become short-tempered with those who “rub us the wrong way” or put up with them while boiling inside, we violate the command of this verse. We may not like every believer the same, and in fact, there are those believers we get along with better than others, but in the body of Christ we need to lovingly forbear even those we do not “like.”

Unity

Finally, the worthy walk is characterized by unity. The word used for endeavoring, *spoudazontes*, refers to hard work.⁸ Paul, in 2 Timothy 2:15, admonishes us to “*study to show ourselves approved to God.*” The word for study is *spouday*. Rightly dividing the word of truth is not something that one does in their spare time while the commercials come on the television, but it is hard work. Peter, in 2 Peter 1:5, tells us to “*give all diligence to add to our faith virtue*” and in 1:10 to “*give all diligence to make our calling and election sure.*” In both cases the word for diligence is *spouday*. Godly living is not a spare-time occupation but requires intense devotion and effort.

One who walks a worthy walk expends a great deal of effort to keep the unity of the Spirit. Note that he does not *create* the unity, but *maintains* the unity that is already there as a work of the Spirit. The Spirit is the one who produces true unity, we need to make sure that we do not create disunity. One who works to keep the unity is a peacemaker, a task to which every believer is called.

Characteristics of a Peacemaker⁹

1. **A peacemaker is characterized by honesty, refusing to think things are OK when they are not.**
2. **A peacemaker is willing to risk pain in order to bring peace.**
3. **A peacemaker is a fighter, willing to fight to bring peace.**

The Cause of a Worthy Walk - Ephesians 4:4-6

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

We now come to the cause of a worthy walk, namely the work of the divine Trinity in the life of the Church. There is strong evidence to the effect that verses 4-6 were an early creed of the Church.¹⁰ If so, then this section was often quoted by the early believers as an expression of

⁷ Hughes, p. 124.

⁸ A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, EBC Vol. 11, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 55.

⁹ Hughes, pp. 126-27.

¹⁰ Wood, EBC Vol. 11, p. 57.

their spiritual life. What we find in this creed is the work of the entire Trinity in enabling believers to walk the worthy walk.

The Unity of the Spirit - Ephesians 1:4

The work of the Holy Spirit is seen in verse four. In this verse we find a threefold work of the Spirit as it relates to body life. First of all, there is one body in which all believers are members. We note the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:13 in which we are told that the Holy Spirit baptizes each believer into the one body of Christ. This baptism is not the baptism of the Spirit as defined by the charismatic movement, but is the baptism of the Spirit in which we are uniquely placed into the Church, the body of Christ. This baptism is *identification*, not submersion.

Secondly, there is one Spirit. By this Paul means that the underlying agent of unity is the one Holy Spirit. Therefore, if there is disunity and schism in the Church, it is because one or more parties are not walking in the Spirit. If every believer in the body is in tune with the Holy Spirit, then they will be in tune with each other.

Finally, there is one hope of our calling. This is in reference to the purpose for which we have been saved, namely Christlikeness. God does not have ten different plans for every believer. He has one. And that is that we be transformed into the image of his Son (Ephesians 1:6). If every believer is actively striving for Christlikeness, unity is much easier to come by. The main thing that brings disunity is when we as believers pursue our own goals, and not those of God.

The Unity of the Son - Ephesians 1:5

Next, we find the unity of the Son. First, we are told that there is one Lord. There is only one person to which we owe our allegiance, and that is Christ. We do not serve many masters, but only one master. As a result of this, there is only one faith. The idea of faith here is not salvific faith, but *the* faith, the revealed truth of the Gospel and the New Testament. Jesus Christ is not *a* way, but *the* way. We do not have multiple truths just as we do not have multiple Lords.

Finally, there is only one baptism. This can be interpreted as spiritual baptism or water baptism. If it is in reference to Spirit baptism, then it means that there is only one agent responsible for placing us into the body of Christ. If it refers to water baptism, then it refers to that single act whereby a person outwardly identifies with the church.

The Unity of the Father - Ephesians 1:6

Thirdly, we have the unity of the Father. Whereas there is a three-fold unity with the Spirit in verse four and the Son in verse five, there is a singular unity of the Father in verse six. The unity produced by the Father is above all, and through all, and in all. This is a reference to the comprehensive nature of unity. When we as believers see ourselves as part of God's family in which he is the head and we are but members, then we will live in harmony with each other.

Christ's Gifts To His Church - Ephesians 4:7-16

Paul now turns his attention to the resources Christ has given us to enable us to walk the worthy walk. God never calls us to do something for which he has not enabled us. In this section of Scripture we find that first of all we have been given a gift as individuals to enable us to walk worthy. Next we find the reason that Christ is able to give us those gifts, and finally we are told about the gifted men Christ has given the Church and the purpose for which they were

given. In both the individual gifts, and the gifted men, the underlying concept is that of unity. Our individual spiritual gifts are given to unify the body, and the gifted men Christ gave the Church produce spiritual unity as the preach and teach God's Word.

Christ's Gifts To Individual Believers - Ephesians 4:7

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Paul starts out this section by talking about Christ's gift to us as individuals. The word for grace, *charis*, refers to the nature of the gift, its graciousness. The gift we have from Christ is totally undeserved and unmerited. The other word used for spiritual gift in the New Testament, *pneumatika*, refers to the source and empowerment of the spiritual gift. It is this word that is used in 1 Corinthians 12:1.

When we became a believe in Christ, we were given a divine gift which is a package composed of Divine enablements which is given to every believer at the moment of salvation by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of ministering to others in the Body of Christ. We only get one gift, although that gift is made up of many separate components, or enablements. 1 Peter 4:10-11 says, "*as every man has received the gift.*" We have but one gift, although it is multifaceted and tailor-made by the Holy Spirit for us alone.

In Romans 12:6-8 we are given a list of seven enablements, and in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28 we have another 13, two of which are in common with the list in Romans 12. Peter divides all the gifts up into speaking gifts and service gifts (1 Peter 4:10-11). The idea is this, our individual gift, given to us at the moment of salvation, is a mixture of these individual divine enablements. Furthermore, no mixture is unique. Many men can have the divine gift of teaching the Word of God, but all will do it differently and to different audiences. Some may do very well teaching seminary classes for graduate students while others can connect with young people. Although the basic enablement of teaching is the same, the way in which that enablement is exercised is different.

A Brief Theology of Spiritual Gifts

1. All Christians have them.

This first point we need to make regarding spiritual gifts is that every Christian has at least one. It is not possible to be a Christian, and not have a spiritual gift. 1 Peter 4:10 says "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold [multicolored] grace of God."

2. They are given and energized by the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, spiritual gifts are given to us by the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:11 says "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." Not only are they given by the Spirit, but they are energized by the Spirit as well. 1 Corinthians 12:6 says "there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh in all."

3. They are given to minister to others, not ourselves.

Thirdly, spiritual gifts are given to edify the body of Christ as a whole, not for the edification of the holder of the gift. This is why Paul comes down so

tongues. They had made the gift into a self-glorifying and self-edifying manifestation of the Spirit not realizing that all spiritual gifts are for the benefit of the entire body. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says *"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."* The Greek construct literally means "for the good of those gathered together."

4. They are essential to the health of the Body of Christ.

Fourthly, spiritual gifts are essential for the health and well-being of the church. A careful study of each of the spiritual gifts, which is beyond the scope of our current discussion, will reveal the necessary character of each gift. The church could not function as God intended, if it were not for spiritual gifts.

5. They are to unite the Body of Christ, not divide it.

Spiritual gifts are given to unite the Body of Christ. A reading of 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 will clearly show the uniting power of the gifts. Conversely, whenever we see a Christian ministering their gifts and causing division and harm, we can rest assured that they are not empowered by the Spirit.

6. They are not a measurement of spirituality.

Perhaps no single point regarding spiritual gifts is more misunderstood than this one. Spiritual gifts do not give a measure of spirituality. If we look at the Corinthian Church as presented in 1 Corinthians, we find that they had every conceivable sin and problem, yet Paul states in 1 Corinthians 1:7 that *"ye come behind in no gift."* The Corinthian believers had manifestations of all of the spiritual gifts even though they were characterized by carnality and division.

7. They fall into various categories.

Seventh, spiritual gifts fall into several distinct categories. Every believer has a unique gift made up of a combination of these distinct categories. Peter calls our gift *"the manifold gift of God"* in 1 Peter 4:10. The word "manifold" means "multicolored." Just as the light falls on a gem and is broken out into various colors and hues, so God's spirit has given us a gift that is manifest in many different ways. For example, the gift of teaching can be given to a seminary professor as well as a first-grade Sunday School teacher. Both have the teaching gift, but it is ministered in different ways to different audiences.

The Basis For Christ's Gifts - Ephesians 4:8-10

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

Why is it that Christ has given us gifts? It is because of his triumph over sin and death. In these three verses we are given a graphic picture of Christ's triumph in the metaphor of a victorious general returning from battle with the spoils of war.

In doing this, Paul quotes Psalm 68 which is a victory Psalm.¹¹ In this Psalm we find the victorious Israelite army marching through the streets in celebration of their victory over Jerusalem and the triumphant ascent up Mount Zion. In those days when a king won a great battle, he would march in triumph and display not only the spoils of war, but his own loyal soldiers who may have been captured by the enemy.¹² As part of the victory celebration, he would often distribute the spoils of war to those soldiers who had displayed courage as well as to others to whom he would like to show his favor and generosity.¹³

Christ's ability to give gifts to the Church is as a direct result of his defeat of Satan. In Colossians 2:15 we find that Christ defeated Satan, sin, and death. In descending to the earth, and dying for our sin, he was able to ascend into heaven taking us that were captive to sin and Satan into the heavenlies with him. Some interpret the phrase, "descended into the lower parts of the earth" as a reference to hell, although it could just as easily refer to the earth itself.¹⁴ In any case, Christ's authority to distribute gifts to the Church, as well as the Gift of the Holy Spirit and all that goes with that, is predicated on his ascent into heaven.

Christ's Gifts to the Church - Ephesians 4:11

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Paul now gets to the point of this passage, namely Christ's gifts to the Church which are gifted men. When Christ ascended into heaven he did not leave the Church defenseless, but gave it the gift of the Holy Spirit as well as gifted men who would teach and lead the Church in his absence. In this verse Paul lists four groups of gifted men, apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers.

Apostles

The first group of gifted men were the apostles. This group, along with the prophets, had three basic responsibilities.¹⁵ First, they were to lay the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20), secondly, they were to receive and declare God's revelation (Acts 11:28; 21:10-11; Ephesians 3:5), and thirdly, they were to confirm the word through signs and wonders (2 Corinthians 12:12; Acts 8:6-7; Hebrews 2:3-4).

It is important to note that the first two groups, apostles and prophets, formed the foundation of the Church. As a result, there are no true apostles and prophets today. Some would like to teach the concept of apostolic succession, claiming that there are true apostles today that can trace themselves back to the first apostles. That is not so. True apostles had to have been personally selected and commissioned by Christ, seen the risen Lord, and been able to perform the sign gifts. No such men exist today.

¹¹ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 138.

¹² F. F. Bruce, *Epistles to the Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, NICNT, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), p. 341.

¹³ William Hendricksen, *Galatians and Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), pp. 190-91.

¹⁴ Bruce, p. 343-44.

¹⁵ John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), pp. 322-24.

Prophets

As mentioned above, prophets formed the foundation of the Church along with the apostles. The word for prophet, *prophetes*, refers to one who “speaks before.” Although it is certainly true that a prophet predicted the future, it was more common for a prophet to merely proclaim the truth of God that already had been revealed (1 Corinthians 14:3).

In the early church, the revelatory aspect of the office of a prophet was necessary since God had not yet fully revealed the New Testament. Once, however, God’s revelation was completed, the true office of a prophet was no longer needed. They fulfilled a crucial and necessary role in the bringing of divine revelation, but once that revelation had been given their purpose for existence disappeared.

Evangelists

Whereas the first two groups of gifted men passed off the scene with the completion of the New Testament, the last two groups of gifted men are in operation today. Evangelists are those who go to a place where Christ has not been preached, win people to Christ, plant a church, ordain elders, and move onto another place.¹⁶ In the early Church this office was done mainly by apostles, but we do know that others shared this gift. For example, in 2 Timothy 4:6 Paul encourages Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist.” In Acts 8 we are introduced to Philip who is later called an evangelist (Acts 21:8). Hence, we see that evangelists were composed of men other than apostles and that their office evidently continued after the founding of the Church.

Pastor-Teachers

The final group of men given to the Church are the pastor-teachers. There is strong textual support for seeing this as one group instead of two.¹⁷ Men who have been gifted as pastor-teachers have the charge of leading, feeding, and weeding the flock.

Terms for Elder or Pastor in the New Testament¹⁸

1. ***Presbuteros* - elder. Used to refer to the quality of spiritual maturity.**
2. ***Episkopos* - bishop. Used to refer to the quality of spiritual leadership.**
3. ***Poimen* - shepherd. Used to refer to the quality of caring and feeding.**

The best verse in the New Testament where we see the work of those who comprise this group is Acts 20:28 which reads, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Paul is addressing the Ephesians elders who had come down from Ephesus to Miletus to meet him as he made his way back to Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey. In his address to the elders Paul makes this statement, in which we find several important notes about the office of an elder.

First, the elder must take heed to themselves. In 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 we find the qualities a man who is an elder must have. Those who lack these qualities, or lose these qualities,

¹⁶ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 142-43.

¹⁷ Hendricksen, p. 197.

¹⁸ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 143-49.

forfeit the right to be an elder. Secondly, elders are over the flock of God and are to feed the flock. The word for pastor, *poimen*, means shepherd. A pastor's responsibility to the flock is to feed them the Word of God which can produce godliness and growth. Thirdly, the elder is called an overseer. As such, he is to mediate Christ's rule in the Church by leading the Church into truth and seeing that the Church is all that God would have it be. Why is that? It is because the flock does not belong to the shepherd, but to Christ who purchased it with his own blood. Being a pastor-teacher is a high calling, and one that must be taken seriously.

The Process and Purpose for Christ's Gift to the Church - Ephesians 4:13-16

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

We now come to the reason for which Christ gave the Church gifted men, and that is leadership and spiritual growth. Again, when Christ ascended into heaven he did not leave the Church without the spiritual resources for completing the task of evangelization. He gave the Church first and foremost the Holy Spirit, and secondly as we have seen in the previous verse, he gave the Church gifted men. Let us now look at the reasons Paul lists for which God gave gifted men.

Equipping - Ephesians 1:12a

The first reason given is that of equipping. The word for equipping, *katartismos*, refers to the restoration of something to its original condition. It was used medically to refer to the process of setting bones and commercially to the task of mending nets.¹⁹ The primary function of the gifted men is to equip the saints in order to produce Christlike character in their life as well as the fruit of the Spirit. In other words, it is not the task of the evangelist and pastor-teacher to make people feel good, or to deliver enjoyable sermons, or to preach sermonettes for christianettes. The job of the evangelist and pastor-teacher is to proclaim the truth of God's word so as to produce spiritual growth and fruit in the lives of the listeners. That is their foremost and highest calling

Four Means of Equipping²⁰

- 1. Teaching - the ministry of the word.**
- 2. Prayer - the ministry of intercession.**
- 3. Testing - the ministry of purging.**
- 4. Suffering - the ministry of perfecting.**

Service - Ephesians 1:12b

¹⁹ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 152.

²⁰ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 153-54.

The second task of the gifted men is to equip the saints so as then can do the work of the ministry. Another way to look at this is service is the product of equipping. It is common for people to believe that it is the task of the paid staff to evangelize, preach, and run the Church. Not so. In fact, the paid staff and pastors of a Church *cannot* do the entire work of the ministry, it is too vast. The pastor-teacher's task is to proclaim the Word of God so that the average person in the Church can do the work of the ministry. In fact, if the gifted men do not do this task they are shirking their responsibility before God.

Building Up - Ephesians 1:12c

This is the third step in the progressive task of the evangelists and pastor-teachers. When the gifted men have equipped the saints, the saints will do the ministry, and the result will be the building up of the body of Christ. The word for edification, *oikodomeo*, was used in commerce to refer to the building of some structure.²¹ The Church is built up when each member of the Church is functioning as a fully equipped saint.

Unity of Faith - Ephesians 1:13a

From the *process* of verse twelve we now come to the *purpose* of verses thirteen through sixteen. The reason for Christ giving the gifted men is so that they may build up the body of Christ by teaching individual members to do the work of service, which will now result in unity. The idea of faith in this verse is not the salvific faith, but the revealed faith of the New Covenant. In other words, it is the Gospel in its most complete form.

Instead of being unified through the faith, more often than not we are split into many different groups. If this verse teaches anything, it teaches that as far as the essentials of the faith are concerned we are to be unified. Only when an essential component of faith is being compromised do we have the luxury of not being united. Note furthermore that this unity is achieved when the Church has been properly taught the truth. Truth brings unity, falsehood brings disunity.

One of the great mysteries in the Church is that we are to be united even though diverse. No two members of the body of Christ have the exact same spiritual gift. We all do not think alike, and we all have different personalities. Nevertheless, we are to be united because that unity is an outgrowth of the work of the Holy Spirit in our life. When we exhibit unity through diversity we show the world the greatness of God.

Knowledge - Ephesians 1:13b

The second result of the ministry of gifted men is a knowledge of Christ. The word for knowledge here, *epignosis*, refers to the full, deep knowledge of Christ known only to true believers. This is not a knowledge about Christ, but a knowledge of Christ. Paul's desire in *Philippians 3:10* was to "know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being made conformable to his death." That was not a superficial desire.

Maturity - Ephesians 1:13c

The third result of the ministry of gifted men is that of spiritual maturity. This is achieved when the gifted men have exercised their ministry to the Church in the area of proclaiming the Word of God that changes lives. Although it is not possible to completely and totally

²¹ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 156.

achieve Christlikeness in this life, nevertheless we can grow until we reach a stage of spiritual maturity that is marked by a consistent life of godly attitudes and a holy character.²²

Sound Doctrine - Ephesians 1:14

Fourthly, a result of the ministry of gifted men in the Church is that of sound doctrine. One of the greatest concerns Paul had regarding the churches he founded was that they be sound in doctrine. John, in 2 John 4 writes, "I have no greater joy than my children walk in truth." On the other hand, one of the greatest sorrows to the heart of a pastor is when the people in his church punt sound doctrine for a lie. As one reads the Pastoral Epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, the concept of sound doctrine occurs ten times. The word for sound, *hygeneis*, means "healthy." We get hygenic and hygiene from it. Sound doctrine is healthy doctrine which produces godly character and holy attitudes.

Sound Doctrine in The Pastoral Epistles	
1.	Sound doctrine produces fruit which is opposite that found in evil men - 1 Timothy 1:10
2.	Sound doctrine is the teaching passed down from Christ to Paul to Timothy - 1 Timothy 6:3; 2 Timothy 1:13; Titus 1:9
3.	Sound doctrine produces a confident boldness and godly character in the life of the believer - 2 Timothy 1:7; Titus 2:2; Titus 2:8
4.	The proclamation of sound doctrine is the duty of the teachers in the Church - Titus 2:1; Titus 1:13
5.	One of the characteristics of the last days is men will no longer desire or listen to sound doctrine - 2 Timothy 4:3

The word sleight is *kubia*, from which we get cube.²³ It is a reference to throwing the dice, hence gambling or trickery. Those who lack spiritual maturity are vulnerable to the false teachers who come in and deceive with cunning craftiness. The word for tossed, *peripheromenoi*, refers to being spun around like a top or that of a boat thrown around on the ocean. There is no stability or anchor, and as such the ship is at the mercy of the seas. Those who lack sound doctrine are like a beach ball tossed about on the waves. Every new idea or neat theological idea smacks them from one side to another as they lack any anchor to the truth. Craftiness, *panourgia*, refers to a deceitful manipulation of the error to look like truth. Schemes, *methodia*, refers to the specific methods of deceit. A spiritual child is susceptible to the schemes and craftiness of false teachers.

Authentic Love - Ephesians 1:15a

The fifth result of the ministry of gifted men is that of authentic love. The word used here, *altheuo*, can be translated "truthing it."²⁴ One of the characteristics of a mature believer is that they are truthful in their dealings with others, and they are not afraid to speak the truth when necessary even though it may not be accepted by the hearer.

²² Wood, *EBC Vol. 11*, p. 59.

²³ Hendricksen, p. 202.

²⁴ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 159.

One who speaks the truth in love is not abrasive or harsh, but gentle. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2: 7-8, “But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.” When we think of Paul, most of us see a harsh and stern individual who would jump all over us given the opportunity. Not so. Although Paul did have a stern side, he also had a soft side. It was his desire to lovingly teach and admonish a Church, and he only resorted to strong language when the loving route had failed.

One of the greatest difficulties in the Christian life is this balance of love and truth. Truth, taken to an extreme, will produce an angry and hard person who has not sense of gentleness. Love, taken to its extreme, will produce a soft sentimentality that will overlook sin so as to not hurt someones feelings. The mature believer, on the other hand, can balance both love and truth. He can firmly, but gently, speak the truth without being harsh or sentimental.

A Fully Functional Body - Ephesians 1:15b-16

The final result of the ministry of gifted men is accomplished with the work of Christ within the body, and that is the fully functioning and sustained internal growth of the body of Christ. When believers grow into Christlikeness, which is what we see in the end of verse fifteen, the body of Christ, which is the Church, will function as it should. The word growth in verse sixteen, *auxesis*, is in the present middle voice and indicates a self-sustaining growth.²⁵ In other words, when the individuals of the body are healthy, the body grows itself. Why? It is because each part of the body, each member, is functioning according to design.

The metaphor used by Paul here is rich. Just as a physical body functions optimally when each part does what it was designed to do, so the Church functions optimally when each member fulfills their God-ordained role. Every Christian is not to be identical with every other believer, there is to be diversity, but it is that very diversity that enables the body of Christ to grow. If everyone was an evangelist, who would do the preaching? If everyone had the gift of service, who would proclaim God’s truth? In the body there is to be diversity, but that diversity all works in conjunction with God’s Holy Spirit to produce a healthy body.

The New Walk - Ephesians 4:17-24

In this next section of Ephesians Paul introduces us to the walk of the New Man. This is a concept which is built upon our position in Christ (Ephesians 2) and the great spiritual blessings we have as believers (Ephesians 1:4-14). Because we are regenerate, we are to act that way. One of the great paradoxes of the Christian life is that although we are new creations in Christ and have been delivered from the bondage of sin, we often go back and exhibit behavior which is in direct opposition to our new life in Christ. The great struggle of the Christian life is to reach the point where our conduct matches our position, our state matches our standing. In these eight verses we will find four contrasts between our old life and our new life in Christ.

²⁵ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 161-62.

The Aorist and Perfect Tense in Romans 6²⁶

1. **Aorist - “are dead to sin” - Romans 6:2.**
2. **Aorist - “all of us have been baptized” - Romans 6:3.**
3. **Aorist - “Have been buried” - Romans 6:4**
4. **Perfect - “united together with him” - Romans 6:5.**
5. **Aorist - “old man is crucified” - Romans 6:6.**
6. **Aorist - “body of sin might be destroyed” - Romans 6:6.**
7. **Aorist - “he who has died” - Romans 6:7.**
8. **Aorist - “we have died” - Romans 6:8.**

A Vain Mind - Ephesians 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,

Paul starts out by giving four characteristics of our old walk. We find the first one in verse seventeen which is a vain mind. The idea behind vain, *matiaos*, is that of emptiness of futility. The unbeliever exists in a state where their thinking process is futile as far as spiritual truth is concerned.

This idea is best summarized in the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes is Solomon’s “lab book” on life. It is a record of his experiments with life and the ultimate conclusions he made about life apart from God. The word “vanity” occurs over thirty times in the book and is used to refer to life lived apart from God. In our past life, we lived in the vanity of a darkened mind. Our thoughts and ideas were always contrary to those of God, and our ultimate destiny was an eternity apart from God.

When we look at our world today we as believers can see the clarity of this concept. We have a problem with teenage pregnancy, so the solution is to install condom machines in the high school. We have a problem with drunk driving, so the solution is to have thirty percent of the commercials on television during football games deal with the various brands of beer one can buy and on top of that we spend millions of dollars a year educating people about the dangers of drinking and driving. We have a problem with immorality so the solution is to have every other sitcom on television pump immoral thinking and innuendo into our living rooms faster than we can shovel it out. Some of the highest rated shows on television are hosted by morally corrupt people who parade the latest in deviant behavior and thinking before the minds of the American people. What kind of thinking is this? It is the thinking of men who live in spiritual darkness. In fact, according to Romans 1:28, we are told that the vain mind of the unbeliever is a judgment from God. They cannot think because they do not want to think, and after a while God fixes them in their vain thinking patterns.

²⁶ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 176.

Spiritual Darkness - Ephesians 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

The second characteristic of our old walk is that of spiritual darkness. Throughout the New Testament we find this metaphor of light and darkness to describe spiritual understanding and ignorance. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 we are told about the unbeliever, “in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” Satan holds his followers in spiritual darkness. In Colossians 1:14 we have been “delivered us from the power of darkness” and in 1 John 1:8 John tells us, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” The contrast is evident. Unbelievers are those who are in spiritual darkness, believers are those who are in spiritual light.

The form of darkened is that of a perfect participle which indicates a continuing state.²⁷ Blindness, *porosis*, refers to something that is harder than marble. The heart of the unbeliever is hardened such that they cannot know or discern spiritual truth. Because of this, they exist in a state of alienation from God. They do not know God, nor do they want to know God.

Moral Hardness - Ephesians 4:19a

Who being past feeling

The third characteristic of the old walk is that of moral callousness. The word for “past feeling” is *apalgakotes*, and was used to refer to a hardened callous on one's skin which reduces the ability to feel pain. A person who is an unbeliever is morally and spiritually insensitive to right and wrong. That is why we can watch a television program in which one parades their deviant behavior with no thought of whether it is right or wrong. Because of this it is necessary for the Holy Spirit to do the work of conviction in order to break through the moral callous that has been built up in the heart of the unbeliever. Without this work of the Holy Spirit, the unbeliever will never sense the reality of their sin.

Depraved Lifestyle - Ephesians 4:19b

have given themselves over unto lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Finally, a moral callousness leads to a depraved lifestyle. The word for lasciviousness, *aselgeia*, refers to the absence of moral constraints.²⁸ It is the word which characterizes most of the sitcoms and talk shows of today. It is appalling to the true believer to see people parade their deviant and perverse lifestyle in front of the entire nation and not give it a second thought. Shows dealing with daughters who sleep regularly with their fathers, or mothers who sleep with their daughter's boyfriends, or threesomes, is not uncommon. Why is this the case? It is because there are no moral constraints in the life of the unbeliever.

As bad as *aselgeia* is, though, there is something even worse and that is *pleonexia*. This is the word used for greediness and refers to unrestrained debauchery.²⁹ It is the characteristic of one who is so perverse that they do not care how they are perceived or what effect their actions have on others. It is the characteristic of a man who will rape and kill a woman for a moments

²⁷ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 169.

²⁸ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 171.

²⁹ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 173.

pleasure, or the actions of someone who robs and kills because they have nothing else to do. This greediness is worked out, *ergasia*, by the one who is unrestrained morally. Another way to understand this is that one who is unrestrained morally will ultimately have that work its way out in debauchery. Sin is self-destructive, and unrestrained sin will ultimately poison and kill the one who practices it. In fact, if it were not for the common grace of God the sinner would implode because of their own immorality and corruption.

A Christ-Centered Life - Ephesians 4:20

But ye have not so learned Christ;

In contrast to the old walk, we are now introduced to the new walk. Our walk in Christ is to be the exact opposite of our old walk. Whereas we were once vain thinkers, we can not think rightly. Whereas we were once in spiritual darkness, we are now in spiritual light. Where we once practiced immorality, we are now to exhibit godly character. Where there was once no mind, we now have a renewed mind.

The first contrast drawn by Paul is that we have not learned to live our old walk from Christ, in fact, our new walk is the exact opposite of our old walk. The word for learn, *manthano*, refers to learning that results in a change. It is not intellectual knowledge, or the addition of new ideas to our old patterns of thinking, but it is a replacement. We have learned with the result that we are different from Christ. If one says they have learned from Christ and yet exhibit a manner of life inconsistent with Christ's walk, they are liars and most likely not believers.

Spiritual Sight and Understanding - Ephesians 4:21

If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

The second contrast is that of spiritual sight. Instead of having a vain mind, we have been given a renewed mind with has been programmed with the truth of God. Since both of the verbs learned and taught are in the aorist tense, this is most likely a reference to salvation.³⁰ When we became a believer, God did a work in our heart and mind by transforming us into a person who not only knew divine truth, but understood divine truth. When we look at those outside of Christ who live in immorality and vanity of mind, we need to realize that if it were not because of the work of the Holy Spirit in our life that brings us a knowledge of divine truth we would be in the same boat as the unbeliever. God transforms our minds. Paul tells us in Romans 12:1-2, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Again, this is paradoxical because although we have a renewed mind, we now need to exercise obedience by renewing our mind. How do we do that? It is by steeping ourselves in the Word of God and prayer. Christ is the source of all divine truth, and we as believers have had our vain mind transformed so that we can know and understand the truth that is in Christ.

A Godly Lifestyle and Practice - Ephesians 4:22

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

The third contrast is that of a godly lifestyle. The unbeliever walks in a pattern of moral depravity and spiritual darkness, the believer walks in holiness and light. In developing this thought in this and the next two verses, Paul uses three aorist infinitives, "put off", "renewed",

³⁰ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 175.

and “put on.” The aorist infinitive is used to refer to action in the past which occurred at a point in time. It can be seen in distinction to the present infinitive which is a past action with continuing results. For example, the aorist infinitive *pisteusai* refers to the past act of belief whereas the present infinitive *pisteusein* refers to being a believer.³¹

Thus, the point being made by Paul is that when we became believers a transformation took place. Our old self, which is corrupt according to its deceitful lusts, was put off. In its place we were divinely renewed in the spirit of our mind, and as a result were clothed with a new man which is created unto righteousness and holiness. Salvation is not addition, it is transformation. That which used to characterize our life is completely gone, and in its place is a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:7). Our task as believers, then, is not to put on the new man, but to live in accordance with that which has already been done in our behalf by God.

One way to consider the old man/new man metaphor is to think of identification. In Romans 6:6 we are told that, “our old man is crucified with him.” Extending the discussion of Romans 5 to Romans 6 helps us to see that the old man is our identification with Adam and death. In some mysterious way I have been identified with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). Because of this, my identity to the old Adam is gone, and in its place is a new man, one that is identified with Christ in his resurrection. I do not have an old nature and a new nature, but only a new nature. The problem is, however, the new creation that I am in Christ is incased in a body of flesh which is where the struggle lies. This is the message of Romans 7. The things I want to do, I don’t do, and the things I don’t want to do, I do. Why? Is it because I have an old nature? No! It is because my new nature is in fallen humanity, and it is this fallen humanity that causes my struggle with sin.

A Renewed Mind - Ephesians 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.

Continuing the discussion of the previous verse, we find that the fourth contrast is a renewed mind and life. I was characterized by lust and immorality, now I am characterized by righteousness and holiness. Again, even though I am righteous and holy, I still have to deal with the resident sin in my members.

Thus, what we find in verses twenty-two through twenty-four is a statement of present reality, not a command for action. The reality is I am a completely new creation in Christ. This is not because I decided to put off the old man, renew my own mind, and put on the new man, but it is because God did this work for me at the moment of my salvation. The command to me now is to live up to the reality of what I am in Christ.

Contrasts Of The Old Walk With the New - Ephesians 4:25-32

Because we are a new creation in Christ, we need to work in order to exhibit a lifestyle in keeping with our exalted position. In the rest of chapter four and then into chapter five Paul draws some specific contrasts between our old and new walk.

³¹ H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, (Toronto: Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 199.

From Lying to Truth - Ephesians 4:25

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

The first contrast is that we need to make a move from lying to truth. It is the characteristic nature of one who is an unbeliever to lie as they are like their father, the devil, who was a liar from the beginning (John 8:44). In contrast, we as believers are to exhibit character in accordance with Christ, who is the embodiment of truth. Liars have their part in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8, 1 Corinthians 6:9), whereas in the eternal city there will be no one who enters there who makes a lie (Revelation 21:27).

If there is any characteristic that is true of our world, it is that no one speaks the truth. We have lawyers who write complicated contracts to insure that one or more parties lives up to its commitments. As a result, we have instituted "fine print" which enables us to legally take advantage of others. Instead of our yes being yes and our no being no, we have invented a complete system of legal lying which enables us to break our word.

In Matthew 23 we are introduced to the system of lying that the Pharisees had created. They taught that if one swore by the temple, it meant nothing, but if one swore by the gold which overlaid the temple then they were bound. Similarly, if one swore by the alter it meant nothing, but if one swore by the gift on the alter then they were bound. Christ's point was that this was hypocritical. What is more holy, the temple, or the gold on the temple? What was more holy, the sacrifice, or the alter that sanctified the sacrifice? In both cases, it was the latter. By developing their system of "legal lying" the Pharisees had completely missed the thrust of the ninth word, "*Thou shalt not bear false witness.* (Exodus 21:16).

Because we have had the old man put off and the new man put on, we are to speak truth to one another in the body of Christ. This is not to be an abrasive truth, or a truth untempered with love, but we are not to deceive or lead others into believing something that is not true.

How We Lie

1. **By exaggerating the truth.**
2. **By keeping quiet and allowing someone to be misled by error.**
3. **By actively telling a lie.**
4. **By refusing to confront error and misunderstandings when it is proper to expose the real truth.**

From Unrighteous Anger to Righteous Anger - Ephesians 4:26

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.

The second contrast drawn by Paul is that of unrighteous and righteous anger. The unbeliever is characterized by an anger that lashes out against those who mistreat or abuse them. Taken to an extreme, it is evidenced by anger, bitterness, and feuds that may last for years or generations. In contrast, the believe is not to allow the insults and injuries received from others result in a bitter, angry, and resentful spirit.

Some teach that it is wrong for a believer to ever get angry. This is not the case. Christ was angry with the moneychangers in the temple who turned God's house into a shopping center. David was angry at the enemies of God who daily lived in rebellion against that which was holy. Paul was angry at Peter for allowing himself to be compromised and by his example lead Jewish believers into error. There is a righteous anger, one that is directed against those who would misrepresent or hurt others.

Anger in the New Testament³²	
Orgay -	This is the anger which is directed at something that is not right - Mark 3:5; Hebrews 3:11; Matthew 3:7; Romans 1:18.
Parorgismos -	An intensified form of orgay which is usually translated wrath - Ephesians 4:26.
Thumos -	The explosive anger which is the result of intense passion and which is always seen as sinful when applied to men - Galatians 5:20; Hebrews 11:27; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8.

The kind of anger Paul is talking about here is the resentful anger that smolders in the heart of one who is bitter. It is the anger that broods, and more often than not, grows with years. When we allow ourselves to fall prey to this kind of anger, we give place to the devil which means we give him a foothold in our lives. Because we harbor bitterness and anger, we are in a state of sin, and as such are susceptible to the attacks of Satan. This is most clearly seen in the life of Cain. Because Abel's sacrifice was accepted and his was not, he allowed bitterness to develop in his heart with the result that he murdered his brother. Bitterness produced resentment which produced murder. This should not be the characteristic of a true believer.

From Stealing to Gainful Labor - Ephesians 4:28

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

The third contrast is that of gainful labor. The characteristic of one who is an unbeliever is that of stealing, the character of one who is a believer should be that of giving. We are told that of the price we pay for merchandise today, at least 10 to 30 percent of the cost is to cover "shrinkage." Shrinkage is another term for inside and outside stealing. Credit card companies charge exorbitant interest in order to cover fraud, which they calculate as a percentage of business. The truth of the matter is, stealing is so common and prevalent today that it is built into the very fabric of our society.

Instead of stealing, the believer is to exhibit an industrious life so that instead of stealing they can give. It is a common misconception to think that people steal in order to meet basic necessities of life, most people steal in order to feather their nest. One of the greatest deterrents to greed and covetousness in the heart of the believer is to develop a giving lifestyle. We should lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven, not here on the earth.

This is the way Paul conducted himself on his missionary journeys. He reminds the Ephesians elders in Acts 20:33-35, *"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to*

³² W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), pp 47-48.

remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*" and in 1 Thessalonians 2:9, *"For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God."* Paul's point is clear. He modeled a life of physical labor so that he could pay for his own needs as well as support those who ministered with him.

From Evil Speech to Holy Talk - Ephesians 4:29-30

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

Someone has said that two of the greatest barometers of true spiritual life are what one does with their money and how one uses their tongue. Perhaps of both of these the greatest is the tongue. The natural character of one who is an unbeliever is that of a foul mouth and a lying tongue. The character of the believer is to be that of gracious and wholesome speech.

The word for corrupt, *sapros*, refers to that which is rotten or spoiled. It was often used to refer to rotten fruit. The picture is graphic. Those who are believers should not have speech that is rotten. In Romans 3:10-18 Paul describes the person who is outside of Christ as says that their *"throat is an open sepulcher."* When the unbeliever speaks it is as though the very rottenness of a grave comes out. In Proverbs 6:16-19 we find that three of the things that are abominable to the Lord are, *"a lying tongue," "a false witness,"* and *"he that soweth discord among the brethren."* Note that all of these have to do with speech. We should get the picture that God has a lot to say about our speech.

James hits this most heavily of all the New Testament writers in James 3. There he likens the tongue to a fire, a world of iniquity. In fact, he says that the tongue is set on fire from hell. The word for hell, *gehenna*, refers to the garbage dump outside of Jerusalem. This is the only place in the New Testament apart from the gospels where this particular word is used. Just like the fires burned down at the garbage dump, so the tongue burns with the very venom of hell. James further states that it is incongruous for the same tongue to honor God and curse men, much the same way it is not right for a fountain to send out both good and bad water.

The Character Of The Believer's Speech³³

- 1. Our words should be good for edification. They should be helpful and constructive.**
- 2. Our words should be appropriate according to the need of the moment.**
- 3. Our words should minister grace to the hearers.**

As believers, we are to have a transformed speech. The things we say should be such that they minister grace to those who hear them, and not destruction. Our words need to be carefully chosen and given so that we can stand without condemnation since we are told that someday we will give an account of every idle word spoken.

Why is it that we need to be so careful about our speech? It is because if we speak unwholesome words we will grieve the Holy Spirit. When our speech is given in anger or as a reaction

³³ MacArthur, Ephesians, pp. 188-89.

against some injury or insult, we actually make the Holy Spirit sorrowful. We need to see that every word we speak is heard by God and will either build someone up or tear them down.

From Natural Vice to Spiritual Virtue - Ephesians 4:31-32

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Lastly in Ephesians four we are told that we need to trade natural vice for spiritual virtue. In some ways this is a summation verse, as some of these things Paul has already been talking about.

First of all, we are told to get rid of bitterness, wrath, clamour, evil speaking, anger, and malice. The word for bitterness, *pikria*, refers to the smoldering resentment we harbor against those who mistreat us. Wrath, *thumos*, refers to the violent and explosive anger which we vent to those who may insult us or injure us. Clamour, *krauga*, refers to the loud and boisterous language we use against others in an arguments. Anger, *orgay*, refers to the deep-seated ill-will we have towards those who have sinned against us. Evil speaking is *blasphemoi* which refers to the character assassination we do of someone we do not like. And finally, malice, *kakia*, refers to all manner of evil thoughts. It has the idea of moral evil or bad thoughts. All of these things need to be foreign to the life of the believer.

Secondly, instead of the natural vices which are normal for the unbeliever, we are to have spiritual virtue. First, we are to be kind to one another. Instead of railing against those who mistreat us in anger and loud talk, we need to be gracious in our behavior. Secondly, we are to be tenderhearted. The word used here, *eusplagchnoi*, refers to the bowels and is a graphic word which means compassion and care. Thirdly, we are to forgive one another even as Christ has forgiven us. Our forgiveness is not predicated on the worth of the one being forgiven, or even predicated on them asking, but should be the free forgiveness given to those who do not deserve forgiveness. Why? It is because it should be the same kind of forgiveness that God has demonstrated to us for Christ's sake.

How To Tell If You Are a Forgiving Person

1. **Am I holding a grudge against anyone for any reason?**
2. **Am I harboring bitterness in my heart towards anyone else?**
3. **Can I exult in the successes of those who have wronged me?**
4. **Do I gloat in the catastrophes of those who have sinned against me?**
5. **Do I gather sympathy from others because of the wrong done to me?**
6. **If I had the perfect opportunity to get even, would I?**
7. **If I was in the position to do something nice for the person who has wronged me, would I?**
8. **Is my concern for the person who wronged me greater than my concern for the wrong they have done to me?**