

OUR CALLING AND OUR WALK  
Ephesians 4:1-3

Intro: Practically everyone I know of who has written on Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians has recognized that the first three chapters are doctrinal; the last three chapters are practical.

This point that I am making is well-known to all of you who are acquainted, not only with Paul's epistles, but with the Bible as a whole. The Scriptures place a very, very strong emphasis on doctrine. There is a harmony of doctrine that runs throughout the Bible. When Paul was speaking of the Scriptures in his last Epistle to Timothy, he said this:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God,  
and is profitable for doctrine . . .

Cf. 2 Tim. 3:16. Doctrine simply means teaching, or instruction. The Bible deals with doctrines, with subjects of instruction, that you will not find in any other book. It is unique for the knowledge that it contains. That is because it is the Word of God. It contains the wisdom of God which go far beyond and above anything that man is capable of discovering on his own.

But Paul also went on to say that these same Scriptures are profitable

. . . for reproof, for correction,  
for instruction in righteousness.

All three of these words are words which speak of the practical application of the doctrine.

Now, as important as the doctrine is (and in God's sight it is extremely important), the doctrine is incomplete without the practical application of that doctrine in the lives of those who are learning the doctrine. In fact, we can only say that we know any doctrine when the effect of that doctrine can be seen in the way that we live.

And so, when we move from chapter 3 into chapter 4 of Ephesians, we are moving from the section where doctrine has been the main emphasis, into the latter section where the practical application of that doctrine becomes the main emphasis. The first is the foundation for the second.

Paul was seeking to bring these two sections together in the very first verse of chapter 4, where he said,

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

In the first three chapters Paul had written about our "vocation," or, our calling. If you could see these words in the original language in which Paul wrote, you would see that

the words, "vocation," and, "ye are called," are from the same root. Our calling is our vocation. In fact, our English dictionaries define a vocation as a calling.

Paul was not using this word, "vocation," of the line of work which we follow here in this world, such as the way you earn your living, but he was using this word of our divine calling, our calling from God, that divine call by which God has brought us to Himself, and made us His children. It is a very important word in Scripture, a word which would keep us from a lot of misunderstanding about our salvation if we only would pay attention to it as it is used in the NT.

It is a word which indicates that our salvation originated with God, and it teaches us that the reason we are saved is because God has personally called us individually to Himself. I called on the Lord to save me, just as you did, but our call was an answer to His call. If He had not called us, and if in our hearts we had not heard His call, we would never have responded to Him, calling upon Him to save us.

It irritates me more than I can say when I hear preachers telling sinners how they should pray to be saved. Listen: when God calls you and me, we do not need anyone to put words in our mouths, telling us how to respond to the Lord. When we hear His call, nobody on the face of the earth could keep us from responding to Him.

But this word "vocation," or calling, indicates another thing that is very important. It indicates that God has a purpose in calling us, and that He knows exactly how He wants us to get from where we are when we are called to that ultimate goal. And the way is called our "walk."

Our calling takes us into the area of doctrine; our walk shows us how our calling is to be lived out in our lives from day to day--moving us daily closer and closer to our final destination which is not only heaven, but our glorification!

The writer of the Book of Hebrews spoke of the people of God as "**partakers of the heavenly calling**" (Heb. 3:1). How are the people of the world going to know that we are "partakers of the heavenly calling"? There is one, main way. It is by our walk, not just by our talk. We are going to find out in chapter 4, 5, and 6 that our talk is included in our walk, but the tragedy is that many who profess to be Christians talk a lot, but do not walk as Christians.

What is involved in our walking?

It is a word whose roots are found in the OT. The first time we come to it in Scripture is in Gen. 5:22 where we read that

"Enoch walked with God." In Gen. 6:9 we read that "Noah walked with God." After that we find it hundreds of times in the OT and the NT.

What does it mean?

Well, it speaks of the way a person lives. His walk is his life. But it not only includes what he says, and what he does, but it includes what he is, how he thinks, and how he does what he does. And if a person is to walk with God, it means that he is to seek, in all that he is, all that he says, thinks, and does, to be pleasing to the Lord. The will of God becomes his will, and pleasing God is His primary objective in all that he is and does.

Our relationship to the Lord in salvation is life-transforming! No part of us is exempt. In our bodies, souls, and spirits, inwardly and outwardly, we are to live so as to please God.

And so we come in our study of Ephesians to:

#### I. THE ALL-IMPORTANT EXHORTATION FOR OUR LIVES (Eph. 4:1).

There is nothing in our lives that it excluded from this. There is nothing that we will find in the rest of this Epistle, nor in any other part of the entire Bible, but what it is included in this grandest of all exhortations! (Read Eph. 4:1.)

Let me review with you briefly what Paul has said about our calling up to this point in the Epistle.

You only find the word, "calling," on time. But remember that I have said that implied in this word is the idea that our salvation originated with God, that it became ours because of God's calling us, and that it speaks of a goal, an objective, a purpose, that God has had from the very beginning in calling us to Himself.

For the word itself, cf. 1:18m.

So everything that Paul has said about God's ultimate purpose in saving us is related to our "calling." If you take that out of the first three chapters, you do not have much of anything left.

What about our walk?

See how we used to walk according to Eph. 2:2, 3.

See how we are to walk now according to Eph. 2:10. And

add to all of that what you find in Eph. 4:17; 5:2, 8, 15.

From this point on in our study of Ephesians, we are going to be discussing our walk, the way we are to live, the things that God wants us to be and do if we are to glorify Him.

BUT THE POINT IN THIS EXHORTATION IS THAT OUR WALK IS TO BE EQUAL TO OUR CALLING, LIKE BALANCING THE TWO SIDES OF A SCALE. WHAT PAUL WAS SAYING HERE BEARS ALL OF THE MARKS OF A SCIENTIFIC EQUATION: WALK = CALLING. IF THE WAY WE LIVE DOES NOT ADD UP TO THE CALLING WE HAVE, THEN SOMETHING IS VERY, VERY WRONG. MY WALK WILL NOT BE PERFECT IN EVERY DETAIL, BUT THERE MUST BE NO QUESTION WHEN PEOPLE LOOK AT YOUR LIFE AND MINE AS TO WHERE WE ARE HEADED, AND WHO IT IS THAT WE ARE SEEKING TO PLEASE.

But how are we to do this? What does it involve? This is a big order: living so as to please God, being concerned about this more than anything else! How do we start?

Well, we have actually started long before we get to Ephesians 4:1. All the doctrine, the teaching, the instruction that Paul has given us to this point, is to help us in our walk. But specifically he set before the believers at Ephesus, and before all of the people of God from that day until this,

## II. THREE IMMEDIATE AND CONTINUING OBJECTIVES.

That is, there are three things that we must always be concerned about as we seek to please God.

The first has to do with ourselves: "With all lowliness and meekness."

The second has to do with our fellow-believers: "With longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

The third has to do with the Church: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

These take us through verses 2 and 3.

Let us begin, then, with . . .

A. Ourselves (Eph. 4:2a): "With all lowliness and meekness."

These are two qualities that you should always expect to see in every Christian, and every person who knows

us should always expect to see these in us: "all lowliness and meekness." What do they mean?

We can see that they emphasize that the child of God should be characterized by humility. A proud person is not a godly person. A proud person cannot please God. Proverbs 6:17 says that the first of seven things that the Lord hates is "a proud look."

"Lowliness" is actually lowliness of mind as it is translated in Phil. 2:3. And perhaps we have our definition in that verse:

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory;  
but in lowliness of mind  
let each esteem other better than themselves.

Trench says that this word brings forth the creatureliness of man and his utter dependence upon God (quoted by Moule, p. 176). And the word "all" would mean every possible lowliness, the greatest humility! No one should be more humble than the child of God. And this is an abiding mental attitude toward himself. It does not fit in with modern psychology, but it is the truth of God.

"Meekness" is submission, especially under trial. When Job's wife told him to "curse God, and die" (Job 2:9), he responded in "meekness" when he said,

Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh.  
What? shall we receive good at the hand of God,  
and shall we not receive evil? (Job 2:10a).

It is seen in our Lord's loving submissiveness to His Father when He said, ". . . nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39b). And this is not only to be exercised in our relationship with God, but when men may do their worst toward us, as was the case with David when Shimei cursed him.

We must never forget that we are only sinners saved by grace, undeserving of God's goodness, grateful for every evidence of His mercy toward us.

- B. Others (Eph. 4:2b): ". . . with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

"Longsuffering" means persevering in the same way during trials and illness that a person manifests when things are going well. Joseph is a good example here. So is David. So is Job. So is Paul. And pre-eminently our Lord is the greatest of all examples.

There is no desire for revenge. The longsuffering person is willing to leave the outcome of his trials in the hands of the Lord, trusting in the fulfillment of His purposes. This takes us back to our calling.

"Forbearing one another in love" -- A forbearing person does not insist upon his rights. He is willing to suffer injustices if this be the will of God. Again, we have no greater example than our Lord. When His enemies said, "If thou be the Son of God . . . ," they were tempting Him to demand His rights as the Son of God. Many times we get what we deserve in the way of trouble and suffering, but there are other times when troubles come upon us undeserved and unjustly inflicted. It is especially hard when it comes from our brothers and sister in Christ. But that is what Paul was talking about here. The greatest threats to our peace, to our fellowship, and to the glory of God, are not from the world outside, but from others within the family of God.

And so Paul concluded this section with words which have to do with:

- C. The Church (Eph. 4:3): "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

I cannot emphasize too much that Paul was primarily concerned about the work of God in each one of us, and among us, in our relationships with each other.

There are two things about the Christian's walk that are miraculous:

- 1) The changes that have taken place in us.
- 2) The way we get along with each other.

Note that we do not make the peace. The Lord did that, as we learned in 2:15. But we are to "keep" the peace. We will see more about that next week, the Lord willing, as we get into verses 4, 5, and 6.

Our "peace" with each other is an expression of our "unity," our oneness, in the Holy Spirit. "Unity" is not the result of organization. Denominations are often the scenes of the greatest strife and conflict. Our oneness is in Christ, and that is to be maintained, as we have seen, and shall continue to see, by a united allegiance to the truths of God's Word, and by a united endeavor to do all that will please God, and all for the glory of God.

Concl: There is one expression I have passed over, and I purposely kept it to the last. It is the way in which Paul identified himself as he began this practical section. Notice again how he started the chapter: "I THEREFORE, THE PRISONER OF THE LORD, BESEECH YOU . . ."

What an example to all pastors! What an example to all who teach the Word! What an example to all parents who want their children to know the Lord, and walk with Him! He wanted the Ephesian church to know the nature of His message as he began writing, and so he called himself "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." But we see also this title that he used in chapter 4 at the beginning of chapter 3.

Did he deserve to be a prisoner in Rome? No! Was he frantic, or irritable, or resentful, or rebellious, pitying himself that such a thing could happen to him? No! What was he? He was a faithful servant of the Lord, carrying on his business as best he could, showing the Ephesian believers what the Lord wanted them to do by doing the very same things himself!

He did not lose sight of his calling. He did not lose sight of his God. He knew that it was all according to God's plan. And he also realized that the more difficult our circumstances, the greater the opportunity to show a needy world how sufficient the Lord's grace is to keep us sweet, and trusting, and faithful, even when everything seems to be against us.

May the very facts that what we have been considering today is the Word of God, plus the example of the Apostle Paul, and the witness of the Spirit to our own hearts that this is the right way, cause us to follow the example of Paul, and the example of our Lord, and of countless saints who have gone before us, in walking in such a way that people will find no inconsistency between what we believe and who we claim to be.

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT  
Ephesians 4:4-6

Intro: The writer of the Book of Hebrews spoke of the people of God in the first verse of the third chapter as, "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling."

Paul was touching on the same theme when in Eph. 4:1 he exhorted the believers at Ephesus to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith" they "were called." Our calling is "heavenly" because it is from heaven, and it calls us to live a "heavenly" life here on earth. Our walk and our calling are to be equal to each other. It is a denial of our calling whenever you find a child of God living like people normally live here on earth.

We learned also in from the second verse of chapter 4 that the first characteristic of such a walk, such a life, is humility. We are going to be thinking this morning about keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Paul wanted the Ephesian church to know that the great enemy of unity in the church is pride in the hearts of the people of God. Proverbs 13:10 says,

Only by pride cometh contention:  
but with the well advised is wisdom.

We all have pride in us, and, therefore, if we do not deliberately and constantly seek to be humble, unity in the church is impossible. And yet pride is often not only tolerated even in our pulpits, but it is encouraged and rewarded.

Remember that "lowliness" is lowliness of mind, and so it is not merely some external behavior, but a genuine way we feel about ourselves. "Meekness" describes that submissiveness in which we accept all of God's dealings with us as good. Job was amazed that his wife did not understand that they ought to expect trials from the Lord as well as obvious blessings.

But we also need to be "longsuffering" toward our trials, and toward each other. Job is a good example. Even when people seem to be the ones who are responsible for the troubles that we have, a "longsuffering" person does not seek revenge. He is willing to leave himself, his reputation, his circumstances, in the hands of the Lord. As we will be studying the life of Joseph in our evening services, we will have the opportunity to observe what "longsuffering" is when we see Joseph's attitude toward his brothers.

And by "forbearing one another in love," our love for each other causes us to be willing to relinquish our rights, things we have a right to, in order that there be peace. I think of Abraham and his relationship with Lot when I think



of a forbearing person. When he divided the land with Lot, the first choice really belonged to Abraham, but he gave it to Lot, and graciously took what Lot had left for him. That is forbearance.

Paul said all that he did in verses 1 and 2 of Ephesians 4 to lead up to the statement he made in verse 3:

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit  
in the bond of peace.

We do not create "the unity of the Spirit," but we are to endeavor to keep it. And all of this is what makes up a walk that is "worthy of the vocation wherewith" we "are called."

This leads us up to verses 4 through 6 which are actually my text for today, but, as I have said repeatedly, the message of Ephesians is not a series of individual texts or verses, but it is a unified message, and we will miss the point of any passage if we fail to see how one theme flows into the next, and so on throughout the Epistle.

Let us think seriously about this third verse, and then we will go on to verses 4, 5, and 6 to get the help we can from them so we can do what Paul has told us to do in verse 3.

**"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."**

"Endeavouring to keep" is an expression which suggests that we have a never-ending job to do, a task that requires the greatest diligence on our part to hold on to what is already ours. It suggests that there will be all kinds of circumstances, of people, of feelings even within our own hearts that will threaten this unity that there is among the people of God, that "bond" which holds us together. It may be resentment against someone, the feeling that you are being ignored, or are not recognized for what you are doing. It may be selfish pride. It may be thoughtlessness in the things that you say and do. Anything that is a manifestation of pride, or rebellion, or impatience, or resentment, or any word or act or even a thought which is not an expression of love, can be a threat to the peace of the Church.

Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 7:15 that "God hath called us to peace." He told the church at Rome,

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink;  
but righteousness, and peace, and joy  
in the holy Spirit.

And then he followed that with,

Let us therefore follow after the things  
which make for peace,  
and things wherewith one may edify another  
(Rom. 14:17, 19).

He told the Colossians,

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts,  
to the which also ye are called in one body;  
and be ye thankful (Col. 3:15).

It is not an accident that the characteristic greeting of the NT is like we have been learning in Eph. 1:2,  
Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father,  
and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me say this, and I hope you are all listening: OUR GREAT DESIRE FOR TRINITY BIBLE CHURCH SHOULD BE FOR PEACE AMONG US. AND IF WE HAVE TO BACK DOWN IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER (ALL OTHER THINGS BEING WHAT THEY SHOULD), THEN THAT IS WHAT WE SHOULD DO. More trouble than we can imagine is caused in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ because people insist on having their own way.

A church on every corner is something that we have grown up with. We take it as the norm for churches. But I suggest to you today that this is probably as great a source of grief to our Lord as anything that is going on among His people today. In fact, our divisions are the cause of many, many other problems. In His high priestly prayer, John 17, one of His chief petitions to the Father was this:

Neither pray I for these alone,  
but for them which shall believe on me  
through their word; THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE;  
as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee,  
THAT THEY ALSO MAY BE ONE IN US:  
that the world may believe that thou hast sent me  
(John 17:20, 21).

Now let me say that this "peace," this "unity of the Spirit," is NOT PEACE AT ANY PRICE! It is not peace where the truth is sacrificed, or even compromised. This is peace that has certain practical characteristics, some of which we have considered, but it also has some very definite doctrinal characteristics which must never be violated.

What are they? Here they are:

- 1) "One body."
- 2) "One Spirit."
- 3) "One hope of your calling."
- 4) "One Lord."
- 5) "One faith."
- 6) "One baptism."
- 7) "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Now let me define for you what "the unity of the Spirit" is which we are to guard very carefully, diligently, so that we will never lose it. It is when we live holy lives which are

consistent with our calling, carefully and faithfully holding to the great doctrines of our faith. It is not a unity in which we depart from the truth, but a unity in which we stand upon the truth and live according to the truth. Then, and only then, can there be that "bond of peace" which makes the fellowship that the Lord's people have with each other a foretaste of heaven on earth.

We have considered the basic practical requirements; now let us look at the doctrinal requirements.

Paul did not go into detail on these. He said more about our "hope" and about God, the Father, than he did about any of the others, but he obviously felt that the people knew what he had in mind, and I am sure that they did. Let us consider each one, and make sure that we understand. Ignorance of these truths is one of the major reasons there is so little unity in our churches, and so little peace.

Running through this list is a very important emphasis that I do not want you to miss. It is in what Paul said about the Spirit, the Lord, and God, the Father. So let us begin with:

#### I. THE TRINITY.

This is where you find one of the greatest causes for disunity among professing Christians today. There are multitudes of professing Christians who do not believe in the Deity, the equal Deity of the Spirit, the Lord, and God, the Father. Or they do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a true Person. He may be, some say, some kind of an emanation from God, but not a Person. There is widespread belief that it is possible to know God without coming to Him through Christ. Many claim that Jesus Christ was a good man, but that He was not God. And there are those men, they call themselves ecumenicists who are willing to sacrifice any of these truths for the sake of unity. They say that the main thing is that we get together, and if we have to give up these doctrines in order to do so, then we need to give them up!

Nothing could have come more from the depths of hell itself, and from the heart of Satan. Paul said that there is "one Spirit," not many. He is the Holy Spirit. And there is "one Lord," and He is the Lord Jesus Christ. And there is "one God and Father of all," not of all men indiscriminantly, but of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Cf. John 1:12, 13.

These are the Three Persons of the Godhead, equal in their Deity, all worthy of our worship, our trust, and our absolute obedience. And the church's unity is

established on these great truths. There are not many spirits, many lords, many gods. There is "one Spirit . . . one Lord . . . one God and Father of all . . ."

In relation to the Father, Paul spoke of three attributes of God (which also apply to Lord Jesus and the Spirit). He said that God is not only our Father, but He is "above all, and through all, and in you all." They speak of God's sovereignty, His omnipresence (and probably His providence), and His indwelling--truths which instead of being believed, are disputed, and often rejected. May we never turn out backs on these great truths. They are the three main pillars that support all of the other truths.

Secondly, let us consider the doctrine that Paul mentioned first:

## II. "ONE BODY."

This, according to Eph. 1:22, 23 is "the church." There are not many churches, but only one. All local churches are to consider themselves as members of each other, and all together make up "the body" of Christ on earth.

Obviously, this is the point that we must start from. This is what the Lord's people need to be taught. Our divisions are due to the fact that we are not holding to the truths once for all delivered unto us, but we have gone off on our own special pet doctrines, and have emphasized them to the point of making them heresy, and thus contributing to divisions within the body of Christ.

Perhaps we will never see this changed, but in our hearts we must recognize what the plan of God is, and work toward that which some day God will accomplish fully. Cf. Eph. 1:8-10.

Then, after mentioning the Holy Spirit, Paul mentioned:

## III. "ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING."

We have already been thinking about our calling, its object, its ultimate purpose, and we have seen that it is to be like Christ. We are going to be in heaven, but what is even more important, we are going to be "like Him."

And God has only "one hope" for all of us. We believe that for ourselves, but it sometimes hard for us to believe that about some of the Christians we know. But it is just as important for us to believe that the Lord is working in our fellow-Christians, bringing them to the

same destiny as that which He has for us. God never gives up on any of us. We may give up on ourselves, or on each other, but He never does. Cf. Phil. 1:6.

Next, after mentioning the Lord, Paul wrote:

#### IV. "ONE FAITH."

This can mean one of two things:

- 1) Either that there is only one way for people to be saved, or
- 2) That Paul was referring to the sum-total of doctrine in Scripture, such as he had in mind when he referred in other passages to "the faith." Cf. 4:13.

I am inclined to think it is the second because that would also include the first.

We only have one Bible. It is our final and absolute authority for what we are to believe. Our doctrines are established by the Word of God. If it is in the Word, we need to believe it; if it is not, then we need to reject it. When we turn away from the Bible either for our teaching or our practices, we are in trouble. "The unity of the Spirit" is to be seen most fully where the Bible is believed and practiced most completely.

#### V. "ONE BAPTISM."

I do not believe Paul was speaking here about the ordinance of baptism, that is, about water baptism, or surely he would have included the Lord's Supper, too. The church has long been divided over water baptism. Some believe, as we do, in immersion. Others believe in sprinkling. Some believe in pouring. Some do not believe that we should baptize at all.

Now I believe that baptism is important. I believe that every Christian should be baptized. But I also believe that it is tragic that we have paid so much attention to water baptism that I think I am being accurate when I say that the majority of believers do not know what this "one baptism" is!

What is it?

I think there is only one answer. Paul was writing about "the church, which is" our Lord's "body." How are we made to be a part of that "one body" of which He is the Head? Paul told us in 1 Corinthians 12:13. Let me read it for you:

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,

whether we be Jews or Gentiles,  
 whether we be bond or free;  
 and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

You see, it is by the baptism of the Spirit that we have been joined to Christ, and being joined to Christ, we have been made joined to each other as members of His body. And understanding this, is basic to keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Concl: There we have it. Walking worthy of our calling, as Paul described it in verses 1-3, holding firmly to the great doctrines of the faith (which Paul has mentioned briefly in verses 4-6), is the way in which we are to manifest our diligence in keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Now it remains for all of us to ask ourselves two main questions:

- 1) Am I walking so that verses 1-3 describes me? Perhaps the answer we should give to that question can become clearer to us if we ask ourselves what kind of an impression we give to others. Do they think of us as being humble, submissive under trial, loving in my dealings with them, concerned that we do nothing to mar our fellowship with each other?

The second question is this:

- 2) How much does the truth mean to me? How well do I know these doctrines that we have been talking about today? Am I willing to take a stand for them regardless of what it might mean to me?

There are many things for us to be alarmed about in these days in which we are living--the problem we face nationally with drugs, with violent crime, with child abuse, with broken homes, with drinking, with dishonesty in government at all levels, with debt, with terrorism. But I will tell you what we ought to be more alarmed about than anything else, and that is the condition of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church is more concerned about growth than it is about the truth. The Church is more interested in providing entertainment than it is in edifying. The Church is more interested in methods than it is in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Church no longer believes that the Word of God is sufficient for us in this twentieth century; we are turning in increasing numbers to psychologists and councilors, many of whom claim to be Christian, but their teaching is just what they have learned in the secular universities of our country. Our Christian schools are more interested in scholarship than they are in seeing their students conformed to the image of Christ. AND THE CAPSTONE OF IT ALL IS THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD NO LONGER TAKE THE

MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH SERIOUSLY. People often get the impression when they come to our churches that we are more interested in their money than we are in their souls--and sometimes that attitude is justified.

We are a needy people, too. But let us pray that the Lord will so work in our hearts, and so manifest Himself in our lives, that as small as we are as a congregation, and as insignificant as we are in the eyes of men, that God will use us as He is pleased to use us, that we might be His instruments for awakening the hearts of many people to the realization that the Bible is true, that God is the One they need, and that they can only find Him as they seek Him through His Son Who is the One and only Saviour. And pray that, as people visit us, they may find us enjoying true fellowship with one another, and "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

THE GIFTS OF CHRIST  
Ephesians 4:7-11

Intro: At the risk of being tedious, I want to repeat at the outset what I have been saying again and again since we started the exposition of the Book of Ephesians. It is this: We are not dealing with isolated texts, but with a continuous message. Therefore, as we come to a new section, we must relate it to what has gone before, and, as far as we possibly can, to what is ahead.

Many of you will remember the old saying: "A text without a context is a pretext." What is "a pretext"? "A pretext" is something false which is taught as the truth. It may be unintentional, or it may be deliberate. It can generally be stated that false doctrine is the result of dealing with a text while ignoring the "context." The "context" of a verse is made up of the verses which go before, and the verses which follow, which always have a bearing upon the meaning of a text. So this saying means that if we deal with text without noticing and including what has gone before, and what follows after, in most cases we are not going to come up with the true meaning. It is perfectly in order to preach from just one verse of Scripture, or even from a part of a verse. But, when we do, we must pay attention to the context, or we are probably going to be wrong in our interpretation as well as in our application. This is a basic principle of the interpretation and explanation of Scripture. If you were attending a theological seminary, you would learn this in the course that is called, Hermeneutics.

My text for today is Ephesians 4:7-11.

Some of the words in these verses which prove what I am saying are the words, "But," in verse 7, "Wherefore," in verse 8, and the word "And" at the beginning of verse 11. I realize that verse 11 actually begins a new section, which hopefully we will get to next Lord's Day, but it is connected with the preceding verses, and so I want to include it in what we will be considering this morning. There is a flow of truth throughout this Epistle, and we must be careful to tie it all together.

What has Paul been concerned about in this Epistle?

Well, we saw how he began with a great doxology of praise to God our Father for all of the spiritual blessings we have in Christ, blessings which have come to us in salvation. Then, with his prayer in chapter 1, he indicated that we must not stay spiritually where we were when we were first saved, but we must go on. There is much truth for us to learn. There are many changes that need to take place in our lives. We



were chosen to be holy, and that needs to be our present objective in every part of our lives.

However, we are not just to be concerned about ourselves, but we need to realize that we have been made a part of one great body, the body of Christ, which is the Church. And, since there is only one body, one true Church, we are to strive for greater and greater unity with each other. How wonderful it would be if we were actually demonstrating what we sing in that great hymn, Onward Christian Soldiers. The third verse reads like this:

Like a mighty army moves the church of God;  
 Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod;  
**We are not divided, all one body we,  
 One hope and doctrine, one in charity.**

That is certainly our ideal, our goal. That is the way the Lord wants us to be. That is why Paul wrote in the third verse of this fourth chapter of Ephesians,

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit  
 in the bond of peace.

This is a big order. And when you couple with that what Paul commanded of us in verses 1 and 2 of this chapter, we see that we have a job that is far too great for any of us to accomplish in our own strength. We can be hot and cold about it, can't we? One day we want that more than anything else. And then it seems like it takes so little to cool us off--and we show little interest in being what God wants us to be, AND DO!

This is where our text for today becomes so very important, and we will see that if we remember what Paul has just said, and what his emphasis has been from the very beginning of this Epistle.

Let me bring out the point this way. In verse 7 we have:

I. A PERSONAL MESSAGE (Eph. 4:7).

Let me explain what I mean.

Verse 1 is given to all of us together. Verse 2 is given to all of us together. Verse 3 is given to "all" of us together.

And then we see the basis of our oneness as believers in Christ. We all are members of just "one body." We all have the same Holy Spirit. We all have the same "hope," the same destiny. We all have just "one Lord." There is just "one faith," one body of truth, which we are all to believe. There is just "one baptism." And we all have the same God and the same heavenly Father.

So it seems that we as individuals might be lost sight of. Is God just concerned about the Church, the body of Christ, or is he concerned about us as individuals, too?

That is where verse 7 becomes so important.

The word, "But," suggests a contrast. Paul realized that the Ephesians would realize how difficult the standards were which he was setting before them. And so he pointed them to "the gift of Christ." And he indicated that he was saying this for "every one of us."

Look at how Paul emphasized the idea of gifts in these verses we are considering today. You see it twice in verse 7, once in verse 8, and again in verse 11. God is a giving God. Christ is a giving Christ. Salvation began with a gift—right? Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9. All of the blessings mentioned in Eph. 1:3-14 are gifts.

We all have all of those blessings. And we all have the special blessing that Paul mentioned here in verse 7, but we have it measured out according to our personal needs.

One thing is certain: WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT, VERY DIFFERENT! But in another way we all are alike: It is just as impossible for you to be what God wants you to be as it is for me to be what He wants me to be. And it is only as we are becoming what He wants us to be that there is any hope for our unity, our oneness.

And so, what do we need to become what God wants us to be? WE NEED "GRACE," ENABLING GRACE! And that is exactly what Paul talking about here--enabling "grace." And it has been given to each and every one of us. We are saved by the grace of God, and it is only by the power of the grace of God that you and I have made as much progress as we have as Christians. We can all say with the Apostle Paul,

But by the grace of God I am what I am:  
and his grace which was bestowed upon me  
was not in vain . . . (1 Cor. 15:10a).

But what did Paul mean by those words, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ"?

As I understand that phrase I believe that Paul was pointing out that Christ, in giving us grace, does not give it all to us at once, but He measures it out to us daily, and perhaps even moment by moment, as He sees we have need of it.

Do we not all feel that there are certain things that we

could never go through? And yet, when and if we should, we can be assured that God will enable us to go through it by His grace! And yet that applies to the little things as well as to the big things.

Let me remind you that Paul not only prayed continually that the people of God would have peace, but he always preceded his prayer for peace with his prayer for grace. Cf. Eph.1:2.

By nature we are proud; by the grace of God we can be humble. By nature we are rebellious; by the grace of God we can be submissive. By nature we are impatient; by the grace of God we can be longsuffering. By nature we have trouble putting up with people; by the grace of God we can love them. By nature we are drawn toward sin; by the grace of God we can be holy. By nature we want our own way; by the grace of God we can let others have the first choice. You see, it is not that we as Christians are so great, but we have a great Saviour Who personally measures out grace to us individually according to our needs. Without His grace we would all have to give up on the first part of Ephesians 4, and the latter part, and on chapter 5, and on chapter 6. Without the grace of God Paul could not have written his Epistle to the Ephesians.

But let me go on to a second point:

## II. THE PRICE OF THE GRACE OF GOD (Eph. 4:8-10).

One of the characteristics of "grace" is that it is free. We sometimes refer to it as free grace. But that is redundant; that is unnecessary. It is like saying "grace grace." If it is "grace," it is free. There is no other kind of grace.

Salvation is free because salvation is by grace.

But there is another sense in which salvation is not free. It may come as a free gift to us, but it cost the Lord His own life and the shedding of His precious blood. It cost the Father His own dear Son. The price of our salvation cannot be calculated. All of the money in the world cannot purchase salvation. So the price of our salvation was infinite!

That is what Paul was saying in verses 8, 9, and 10.

His words are based upon the idea expressed in Psalm 68:18, 19. Listen to those verses:

Thou hast ascended on high,  
thou hast led captivity captive:

thou hast received gifts for men;  
 yea, for the rebellious also,  
 that the Lord might dwell among them.  
 And then the Psalmist David said,  
 Blessed be the Lord,  
 who daily loadeth us with benefits,  
 even the God of our salvation. Selah.

As you have read those two verses from Psalm 68 in the past have you thought of them as predicting the victorious ascension of Christ following His tragic death on the Cross? That is what David was talking about. He did that to lead "captivity captive," and to be able to give those gifts of enabling grace to us, which David described as those "daily . . . benefits."

You see, before He could ascend, He had to descend--not to hell, but to the grave. He had to die. By His death He made it possible for God to deal with us in grace. But not before He had vanquished all that held us captive, which Paul and David both described as "captivity." What did he mean by "captivity"? He meant all that held us captive--our Enemy, Satan; sin, death, and the grave. The Lord conquered it all, and went back to the Father in complete triumph over all of His foes and ours!

So we are saved and kept and strengthened by grace that is free, but not cheap. It comes freely to us, but it cost the Lord His all! And it is by this grace that we are justified, are being sanctified, and ultimately will be glorified! What a salvation, and what a Savior!

Now one of the main purposes of the ascension of Christ was "that he might fill all things." What does this mean?

I like the explanation given by Dr. S. D. F. Salmond in the Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. III, p. 328. This is what he said:

The thought is . . . that the object of Christ's ascension was that He might enter into regal relation with the whole world and in that position and prerogative bestow His gifts as He willed and as they were needed. He was exalted in order that he might take kingly sway, fill the universe with His activity as its Sovereign and Governor, and His Church with His presence as its Head, and provide His people with all needful grace and gifts.

We read about the sovereignty of our God and Father in verse 6; here we read the same thing about our Lord Jesus Christ. And some day that sovereignty will be exercised

over all of the earth. It is clear that the Lord rules the earth in accordance with the needs of His people. Those needs always come first with Him, and everything else is made to serve the best interests of His people.

But I have one more point. It is the first verse of my text for next week, but I have to mention it today because it has to do with THE GIFTS OF CHRIST. They are:

### III. INSTRUMENTS OF GOD'S GRACE (Eph. 4:11).

Where did the Apostles come from? Christ gave them.  
 Where did the prophets come from? Christ gave them.  
 Where did the evangelists come from? Christ gave them.  
 And where do all true pastors and teachers come from.  
 Christ gives them.

Why?

They are all to help the elect of God become what God wants them to be--BY GRACE! We will be thinking about their ministry of perfecting the saints next week, but I wanted you to see that even the ministry in the church has been ordained of God as one of his special gifts through Christ.

If those of us in the ministry realize this more than we do, how it would humble us! How it would cast us upon God for His grace to us that we might be all to you that we should be!

Concl: Let me just say this in conclusion: Everywhere we as the people of God look, we see that we are surrounded every moment of every day with evidences of the grace of God upon us, and in us, and all around us. Truly, as we learned in Ephesians 1, God is "working all things after the counsel of his own will" (v. 11). THE GIFTS OF CHRIST are, for the believer, everywhere. And fresh supplies are being given momentarily as they are needed--with never any lack. When we fail, it is not God's fault, or Christ's fault, or the fault of the Holy Spirit. It is our fault. May the Lord teach us to look to Christ, and to receive from Christ, as we go through each day of our lives, that continual supply of grace that will enable us to be, and enable us to do, that which will honor our Father, our Savior, and the blessed Holy Spirit.

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR  
Ephesians 4:11-16

Intro: THE GIFTS OF CHRIST! That is what we were learning about last Lord's Day. We saw an emphasis on "gifts" in verses 4, 8, and 11 in this chapter. And we saw in chapter 2 that salvation is one of the gifts of God for which Paul gave thanks in chapter 1, verses 3-14. John 3:16 speaks of our Lord as a gift. (Quote.) In 1 Cor. 3:7 we read that in the work of the Lord, "God giveth the increase." James 1:5 tells us that the God gives us wisdom. 1 Tim. 6:17 teaches us that we are to "trust . . . in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." Rom. 6:23, like Eph. 2:9, tells us that "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." And Rom. 11:29 tells us that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

So, as I said last Sunday, we have a giving God, a giving Savior, and, according to 1 Cor. 12, a giving Holy Spirit. It is no wonder that David said in Psa. 68:19,  
Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits,  
even the God of our salvation. Selah.  
This is why we need to be giving thanks continually and in everything.

We learn today that some of God's gifts are men. And it is very humbling to consider this. The Queen of Sheba paid King Solomon the highest of all compliments when she said, ". . . because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king . . ." (1 Kings 10:9).

Let think for a moment specifically about some of . . .

I. THE GIFTS OF CHRIST (Eph. 4:11).

They are the "apostles . . . prophets . . . evangelists . . . pastors and teachers."

Now not all who claim to be apostles, etc., are to be recognized as the gifts of Christ. There are false prophets, false apostles, false evangelists, false pastors and teachers. Just as there are always the true, so there are always the false. The Devil sees to that because he is the author of confusion. He loves to deceive and confuse the people of God, and so to hinder the work of God.

We are talking about men who were (and are) given by Christ and called by Christ.

A. The apostles.

When we speak of the Apostles we should be speaking of the eleven, and Matthias who took Judas' place, and the Apostle Paul who was truly an apostle, but who never claimed that he had taken Judas' place.

There are some who want to expand the use of the word "apostles" in this verse to include such men as Barnabas who in Acts 14:14 is called an apostle, but I believe it is used there in its literal sense, a man sent from someone to others. In that sense we are all apostles.

But surely, after Paul had written in chapter 2, verse 20, that the church is "built upon the apostles and prophets," and then mentioned them again in 3:5, we can take it that he was talking about the same "apostles and prophets" here in chapter 4. We are to realize that he was speaking of himself, of Peter, James, and John, and all of the others who were originally called apostles. In spite of what some men may claim, the apostles never had any successors, and so we do not have true apostles today. We have plenty of false apostles, but no true apostles.

#### B. The prophets.

These are not OT prophets, but NT prophets.

In Acts 11:28 and 21:10 we read of Agabus, who in the latter passage was called "a certain prophet." He never wrote a book of the Bible, but he was enabled by God to prophesy. The prophets were primarily preachers, and sometimes spoke as Agabus did, by revelation from God, but they were like many of the OT prophets: They did not write.

This group, too, was limited, and there are no successors today.

#### C. Evangelists.

Evangelists are mentioned only two other times in the NT. In Acts 21:8 Philip, one of the seven chosen in Acts 6 whom we consider to be one of the first deacons, is called an evangelist. And in 2 Tim. 4:5 Paul told Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist."

An evangelist is one who preaches the Gospel. But did not the apostles preach the Gospel? And would not the prophets have preached the Gospel? And should not the pastor preach the Gospel? The answer to all of these questions is, "Yes!" Why, then,

would Paul refer to one group as "evangelists"?

Perhaps we could answer that question better after defining what Paul meant by "pastors and teachers." But let me suggest an explanation given by Dr. Chafer in his book, True Evangelism. He said that the true NT evangelist is the man called of God to take the Gospel where it has not been preached before. In this sense, the Apostle Paul was also an evangelist. And he wanted Timothy to do this same work. And so it would seem best to think of the evangelist as a pioneer missionary. This does not mean that he has to go overseas some place, but it does mean that he does not limit his evangelistic efforts to churches. He is interested, as Paul was, and as he expressed himself in these words found in Rom.15:20:

Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel,  
not where Christ was named, lest I should build  
upon another man's foundation.

This was what had hindered him from going to minister in Rome any sooner than he did. He had planned many times before to go, but the Lord kept opening doors of evangelism to the Gentiles, and so he was delayed in his ministry to the church at Rome because there were others who needed to be reached first.

This was Paul's calling. The Lord does not call all of his servants to do the same. It is good to evaluate present-day evangelists, and what they do, in the light of this NT definition.

Finally we come to . . .

#### D. Pastors and teachers.

It seems to be generally agreed among most men whose books on Ephesians I have read, and also by men whom I have heard teach Ephesians, that "pastors and teachers" are not words which refer to two gifts, but one. In fact, the original text seems to prove that it is one, not two. Cf. Salmon in the EGT, III, p. 330.

In contrast with the evangelist who goes out to reach the unreached, the pastor-teacher devotes his time and ministry to the reached—the people of God in the Church.

As a pastor, this one who is called of God, devotes his time to shepherding the sheep—feeding, guiding, protecting, caring for the sheep. As a teacher, he instructs the people of God in the Word of God. A



man cannot be a true pastor without being a teacher, a teacher of the Word of God. And if he is teaching, truly teaching, he will carry the people of God upon his heart, not only teaching them, but praying for them, overseeing their lives in the sense that he is concerned about their growth in the Lord, about their spiritual progress.

And if he is going to be a true pastor-teacher, he must be an example to his people of godly living.

More often than not it has been the practice in recent years to place this responsibility upon one man, the man who is called "the pastor of the church." And it is true that God calls some men to devote their lives exclusively to this ministry. I felt such a call of God upon my life before I was in my teens. But the Word of God nowhere, as far as I can see, places the full responsibility for a local church upon one man. One man cannot do it all. And so Paul spoke of appointing "elders" in every place. And the church was not very old before even the Apostles, who were elders, needed help, and "deacons" were appointed.

So the pastoral and teaching ministry by be in a special way the calling of the man who is called the pastor, yet I think we can say that the pastoral ministry is one involving elders and deacons. The pastor is an elder, and others are his co-workers as fellow-elders.

We can see evidence of what I am saying if we turn to the words which Paul spoke to the Ephesian "elders" in Acts 20. After speaking to them about his ministry among them, he said this in verse 28:

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.

Remember that he was speaking to "the elders of the church" at Ephesus (Acts 20:17), and he called them "overseers," which is the Greek word for bishops! So an elder is a bishop, and an elder was "to feed the church of God." And the verb "feed" in the Greek is the word from which we get the word, pastor. "Feed" means to shepherd, and that is what a pastor does.

So a church man a one who is called the pastor, yet the elders are involved in the pastoral ministry--and so are the deacons.

I am deliberately taking a lot of time with the Biblical definition of the pastor, the elder, and the pastoral ministry, because it is very important that we all understand the plan of God for the Church. It ought to be true of every one of us that we as elders and deacons are where we are because this is the place that God has given to us. And this is not something for any pastor or elder or deacon to be proud about. It ought to be the cause of the greatest humility because no man on earth has ever been worthy to be an apostle, or a prophet, or an evangelist, or a pastor-teacher—just as no child of God has ever been worthy to be a child of God. I ask all of you to pray for those of us who have such a tremendously important, God-given responsibility.

I just have time for one more point.

Most of us are familiar with pastors and what pastors do. But how can pastors and elders (and I would include deacons, too)—how can we know that we are doing what we are supposed to do?

There is only one way: We are going to find out what we are to do in the Word of God. I have already spoken of it as a shepherding ministry, watching over and caring for the sheep, but what specifically does that mean? Let us look at:

## II. THE WORK OF THE PASTOR.

As I point this out, let me remind you that the work of the pastor-teacher (and those who work with him) is the same as the work of the evangelists, and the same as the work of the prophets, and the same as the work of the apostles. The apostles and prophets may have had work that we do not have, but they had the work we have.

What is it? The answer is found in verses 12 through 16. I only have time for verse 12, and possibly for just the first phrase: "The perfecting of the saints."

Pastors are to be concerned primarily with "the saints." Who are "the saints"?

This Epistle was written to "the saints which are at Ephesus" (Eph. 1:1). They are the true people of God, not just those who only profess to be, or pretend to be. They are the people in any place whom God has set apart for Himself. They are His people. They have been saved from their sins. They are the true children of God. And they are called "saints" because the outstanding characteristic of God's people is holiness.

But why did Paul say "for the perfecting of the saints"?

If a person is a saint, is he or she not already perfect?

No, they are not! "Perfecting" means that there is still a lot of work that God has to do in their hearts, and in their lives, and the pastor's work is to be busy seeing that that perfecting work is going on.

Let me point out a contrast between the first part of this twelfth verse, and the latter part. In the first part Paul was concerned about each saint; in the latter part, about the whole body of believers. The saints are not perfected as a congregation, but care needs to be given to each individual believer. No one can be unimportant to the pastor, the elders, and deacons. We need to be concerned about everyone in the church because we grow as individuals! Be sure to note that.

The word "perfecting" has in mind the idea of preparing, or equipping, or completing, or repairing (when that is necessary). One writer has translated this expression as "the complete outfitting of the saints" (Lenski on Ephesians, p. 529).

The English translation of the KJV might give some people the wrong idea. Some day we all are going to be sinlessly perfect, but not in this life. And yet we are to be moving in that direction. "Perfecting" speaks of growing spiritually, learning to trust the Lord, and to walk with the Lord. It means that the saints need to be taught. They need to learn what is in their Bibles. They need to know God, and Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. They need to be taught how to avoid temptation and sin.

Therefore, the pastor and elders and deacons are not entertainers. They are not just to run the church as an organization. There certainly are a lot of details to be taken care of in the work of a church. But the pastor must never lose sight of the fact that his work is people, God's people. And his greatest task is the spiritual growth and blessing of the people who are under his care, and the care of those elders and deacons who work with him. The pastor, more than anything else, is to be a teacher, a teacher of the Word, so that his people will not only know the truths of Scripture, but so they will live out their lives every day in obedience to the Word of God.

And what a joyful task that is! I would not change places with anyone else if it meant that I could not be teaching the Word. And it is a special joy to be teaching you! And if there is a greater joy than

teaching you, it is to see each one of you "walking in the truth."

Concl: Let me close with the words of an old pastor who was also an apostle, and who outlived all of the other apostles. I am speaking of the Apostle John. He lived a good part of his life in Ephesus, and many feel that for the time he was there he served as their "pastor." But he said this in writing to his "wellbeloved Gaius," and John identified himself as Gaius' elder. This is what he said:  
I have no greater joy than to hear  
that my children walk in truth (3 John 4).

Elders and deacons, I hope we can all say that from our hearts. I hope we can say that about our families. I hope that those of you who are parents can honestly before God say that about your children.

But listen: If you and I can say that, we must also say something else. We must also say, **"I have no greater sorrow than to hear that my children are NOT walking in truth."** The Apostle Paul expressed the same feeling when he wrote to the Thessalonian church, and said,

For now we live, **IF** ye stand fast in the Lord  
(1 Thess.3:8).

What is the opposite that also had to be true? "For it will kill us if you fail and fall away from the Lord."

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR finds its greatest Example in our dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He said,

I am the good shepherd (the good Pastor):  
the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep  
(John 10:11).

Paul told the Corinthians,

I seek not yours, but you . . .  
And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you . . .  
(2 Cor. 13:14, 15).

If we can understand these statements I have been reading to you, then we are beginning to understand what THE WORK OF THE PASTOR is to which Christ has given the men who are His gifts. And it is important that we all understand THE WORK OF THE PASTOR so we can all give our support to that kind of a ministry. People often put their pastor, their elders, and their deacons, under pressure to do what other churches are doing, when those churches are headed in the wrong direction. The Lord has appointed our work, and we need to do His will.

## CHRIST'S PLAN FOR HIS CHURCH

Ephesians 4:11-16

## Part II

Intro: For a couple of weeks we have been thinking about the gifts of Christ--gifts which Christ has given to His people, the Church. We have seen that God gives, Christ gives, and the Holy Spirit gives.

The true Church is very dear to Christ. It is made up of His people in this present age. It is far from perfect, far from being what some day she will be. And so from the time the Lord was here He has given the Church apostles (who have no successors), prophets (who have no successors), evangelists (who probably do continue, but not as we think of evangelists today--they are those who take the Gospel to people who have not heard the Gospel before), and pastors and teachers (one office, the one we are primarily concerned with in the church today). I believe it is perfectly according to Scripture to call one man the pastor of a local church, yet we can see from Scripture that he does not do all of the work by himself. All of the elders share the oversight of the people of God with him, and the deacons share the load to make it possible for the elders (a term which includes the pastor) to do the work that God has appointed for them to do.

Last Sunday we took the first step in looking at the work of the pastor, and it is to be seen in that first part of verse 12 where we have the phrase, "For the perfecting of the saints." This has to do with preparing the people of God, equipping them, repairing them when necessary--in short, ministering to them for their spiritual growth and progress so that they can and will participate in "the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ."

The work starts with the individual believer; the whole body is edified as a result. Thus we have growing saints which in turn produce a growing church. The church will only be strong as individual believers are strengthened. And then it is that we will have a strong church (speaking now of the local church).

Churches today are inclined to be concerned about numerical growth. We have a new church term today: **MEGA-CHURCH**. Mega means great, mighty, powerful. But it is identified with size! The idea is that the more people we have, the more powerful we will be.

Let me say at this point that size does not necessarily mean powerful when we are speaking about the church. We all like to see numerical growth, but just because a church has a lot of people does not mean that it is strong. Churches are only

strong in God's sight when they are spiritually strong. A very small church can be a very powerful church because its people are growing spiritually! A large church can be a powerful church, too, but not because it is numerically strong. It is because the people in it are growing in the Lord. So whether large or small, a church will only be powerful as the people in it are growing in the Lord.

It is the work of the pastor-teacher, and the elders, to see to it that they are providing the people of the church with that which is necessary for their spiritual growth. The church must be edified. The church must grow.

These points are stated in several different ways throughout these six verses. (Point them out.)

Now we need to be concerned about the means GOD uses to produce the kind of growth that we are to look for--  
SPIRITUAL GROWTH!

This is where you will find a great deal of different opinions among pastors today. Rather than take a lot of time pointing out the wrong means are, let us look into our text to see what the Holy Spirit led the Apostle Paul to write.

And as I point out certain things from our text, let me tell you that, in this regard, the Word of God is timeless! The Bible is just as up-to-date today as ever. The nature of God's work never changes. What God wanted in the first century church is what He wants in the twentieth century church, and the way He accomplished it then, is the way in which He accomplishes it today.

So, as we turn to our text again, let us notice:

#### I. THE MEANS GOD USES.

We have a strong clue even if we notice again the titles of the men who are mentioned in verse 11: ". . . apostles . . . prophets . . . evangelists . . . pastors and teachers."

What one thing do (or did) all of these men have in common. They were all teachers! Of what? They were teachers of the Word of God. The apostles and prophets not only taught the Word, but practically all of the NT was revealed to them--especially the prophets. An evangelist by his very name is a preacher of the Gospel. The Gospel is to be found in the Word. And there should be no question that the pastor and teacher is a teacher!

SO we come to an important point: **SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

REQUIRES THAT THE PEOPLE OF GOD BE TAUGHT! BUT TAUGHT WHAT?

Let us not just guess about it; WHAT DOES OUR TEXT TELL US?

Let me call your attention to statements in verses 13, 14, 15:

- 1) Verse 13: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith." If we are going to "come in the unity of the faith," we need to know what "the faith" is. What is it? I know that most of you could tell me because I have explained this expression many, many times before. "The faith" is a term which means the sum-total of the truth we are to preach and believe and practice. Where do we find that? In our Bibles. It is the Word of God. So if we are to come to "the unity of the faith," obviously we have to be taught the great doctrines of the Word of God.
- 2) Verse 14: Here Paul spoke of being "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." We can see from our Bibles that from the very beginning of time there has been true doctrine taught, and there has been false doctrine taught. And this is still true today. Now, if we are not going to be blown around by every teacher who comes along, what is our safeguard. The only way I know of to be able to identify false doctrine, is to be well taught in the true doctrine. Where do we find the absolutely true doctrines of God? Just one place: in our Bibles. So again it is clear: we need to be under those who will teach us the Scriptures.
- 3) Verse 15: "But speaking the truth in love . . ." What is "the truth"? Here in our text it can mean only one thing: the Bible again; the Word of God. We cannot speak it until we know it. And if we are to know it, we have to learn it. And if we are to learn, we have to be taught. We can learn the truth on our own, but it is always wise to make sure from "pastors and teachers" that we are learning the truth!

So if Christians are to grow spiritually, the one thing they need is the Word of God. They need, as Paul will go on to show us in the following chapters--they need, we need, to learn it, believe it, and obey it.

But there is one other thing that I want to bring out about the teaching that ought to be going on in every church. And then we will go on to another important point.

I take you back to verse 13.

Notice that Paul said,

Till we all come in the unity of the faith,  
and of the **knowledge of the Son of God . . .**

What did he mean by that?

He meant that, at the heart of all true Bible teaching, you must find Christ. If Christ is not there, recognized as "the Son of God," the teaching cannot be true. If you want to learn about God, you must have Christ. If you want to learn about salvation, you must have Christ. If you want to learn how to live as a Christian, you must have Christ. If you want to learn how to pray, you must have Christ. If you want to know about the future, you must have Christ. The heart and center and circumference and substance of all true Bible teaching is Christ! Listen to what a teacher tells you about the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will soon be able to tell if you are hearing the truth or not. But first you have to learn about Christ for yourself.

Illustrations: Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:46; Acts 8:35; 1 Cor. 1:23, 24:

But we preach Christ crucified,  
unto the Jews a stumblingblock,  
and unto the Greeks foolishness;  
But unto them which are called,  
both Jews and Greeks,  
Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

And this is emphasized in verse 15. (Read.) We do not just grow in our knowledge of doctrine, but we learn true doctrine we are growing up "into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

But let me go on to another point which Paul made here in our text:

## II. WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO PREVENT?

Look at verse 14 again.

There is nothing wrong about being a babe in Christ. In fact, that is wonderful to see--a person who is rejoicing in Christ for the first time. **BUT IT IS NOTHING BUT A GREAT TRAGEDY WHEN A BABE IN CHRIST STAYS A BABE.**

One of two things is certainly true in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ today: Either we have a lot of people who are just babes in Christ, or we have a lot of people who are just pretending that they are Christians, but



they are not! The word that Paul used here means either an infant, or an untaught child. The child of God who has not been taught is an easy prey for the false teacher who comes along with his "sleight" -- a word that has to do with playing with dice, the work of gamblers, whose job it is to cheat those who play with them. The false teacher is one who gambles with the truth of God and with the souls of men. And he uses "cunning craftiness" -- that is, he is skilled in using false wisdom so as to make you believe that it is the truth. And the "lie in wait to deceive." This means that they are skilled in methods that are designed to get us to believe things which are not true.

And there is so much false teaching going around today. And much of it is in our churches, in our schools, heard over radio and television. And the people of God are being duped by the thousands into following men just because they may use the Scriptures, but they have not been taught the truth as it is in Christ, and so they have no basis or ability to see that the truth is being used in the wrong way.

IS IT NOT INCREDIBLE THAT, IN THE LIGHT OF WHAT PAUL HAS SAID HERE, THERE ARE VERY, VERY FEW CHURCHES TODAY WHERE THE WORD OF GOD IS BEING TAUGHT SO THAT CHRISTIANS CAN LEARN AND GROW?

But I am still not through.

Will you notice that Paul's burden in this chapter is not just for individual believers, but it is for all of the people of God in their relationship with Christ and with each other? He is concerned about "the whole body" (v. 16).

Let us notice finally, then,

### III. THE MINISTRY OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BODY TO EACH OTHER.

Look at verse 16.

The Church, the whole Church, has been described as the body of Christ. Christ is the head; believers are the body. We can see something of the meaning if we think of our own bodies. All of us have heads, and we have bodies with various members--some members are external; others are internal. And it is the right thing, the normal thing, for all of the members of our bodies to be functioning in cooperation with each other. When any member of our bodies is out of order, or not functioning properly, we are sick. Our heads and our bodies grow together.

This is one place where the body of Christ is different. Our Head is Christ. He does not grow. But He is the Source of our growth. And He is the One Who makes us function properly in our relationship with each other. And it is only as we are functioning properly, that we grow.

And notice that "love" is mentioned in verse 15 and again in verse 16 as vital to the growth of the Church. We minister to each other. God uses us to provide, by His grace, and always through our Lord, what another believer needs to keep him functioning as he should. People in the body minister to us, and we minister to others, and all of this comes through Christ--and so the Church, the body of Christ grows! We are not speaking now of numerical growth; we are speaking of spiritual growth. The Lord will take care of the numerical growth as He adds to the Church. What He wants us to be concerned with is the teaching that leads to spiritual growth, and the use of that teaching in our personal lives as we minister to each other so that the church is growing.

What I have been saying today applies to the whole body of Christ, but it applies equally to local churches. That which is important in the whole body of Christ must also be important to each of us in Trinity Bible Church, or whatever your church may be.

Concl: These six verses ought to be posted upon the wall of every true church. They ought to be memorized and written upon the heart of every true Christian. It behooves each one of us to see that the church must be teaching the Word of God, or it is failing in its mission. Our primary concern needs to be for our own growth in the Lord. When the Church is spiritually strong, and things are going well within, then and only then can we glorify God in this world, and then and only then can we expect to be a mighty force in the hand of God in bearing witness to the people of the world in our generation.

E. M. Bounds said long ago, "The church is looking for better methods." That is even truer today than it was in his day. But we need to remember that God's method is men--and I say that to include you ladies. Let us seek the truth of God, believe it in its entirety, and seek by the grace of God to live it each day. Then God will be glorified, we will be blessed, and the world will once again realize that God is at work in the lives of His people.

THE OLD WAY, THE WRONG WAY  
Ephesians 4:17-19

Intro: From verse 1 of chapter 4 down through the sixteenth verse, the emphasis has been upon the first characteristic of the life of a true Christian. (Read Eph. 4:1-3.) As we come to the seventeenth verse, we are given the second characteristic. (Read the first part of verse 17.) This will be the emphasis for the remainder of chapter 4. In chapter 5 we have three more references to our walk, or life, as Christians: one in verse 2, the second in verse 8, and the third in verses 15 and 16. We need to keep all of these in mind because it seems that the practical section of Ephesians was based upon these five statements.

Of the five, four are positive (although the last one has a negative addition attached to it); ONE IS NEGATIVE, and that is the one we will be considering today. (Read verse 17a again.)

There are many wonderful positive commands given in Scripture. By "positive" I mean things that we are told to be and/or do. A "negative" command is something that we are told not to do. But, as we can see in our text, the Bible also gives us negative commands. Read verses 26 through 31 in this chapter and you will see more negative commands. We need both even though some present-day teachers tell us that we should never be negative. Eight out of the ten commandments are negative. Psalm 1 begins on a negative note. Romans 12:1, 2 combines the positive and the negative. 1 John 2:15 is another example of a negative commandment. Any person who reads his Bible can see that negative commands, things we are not to do, are found all through the OT and the NT.

It is clear that we need the negative. The negative often clarifies the positive. We are so inclined to think that our way is right that it often takes a negative to wake us up. It seems that parents, out of necessity, spend more time telling their children "no" than telling them what they should be and do.

So the people who say that we should always be positive, never negative, just do not know what they are talking about. It is wrong to be only negative. To listen to some people you would think that the Christian life is a life where a person does not do this, or that, or some other thing. And it is true that there are many things that a Christian should not do. But we also need to emphasize what a Christian should be and do. It is only when we put the negative and the positive of the Christian life together that we have a true picture of what a Christian is, and how a Christian

should live. So let us not be all negative, or all positive, but negative and positive. I hope that each of you understands what I have been saying.

Let me say one more thing about Paul's emphasis upon our walk in Ephesians before we look more closely at our text.

It is this: He had mentioned walking two other times in Ephesians in addition to those which I have mentioned:

- 1) In Eph. 2:2--the way every Christian used to walk. This ties in with our text for today because the way Gentiles (and Jews) walk today is the way all of us walked before we became Christians. The Christian life, or to refer to it as our the Bible does, the Christian walk, is very, very different from the life that people live who are not Christians. It is distinctly different!
- 2) In Eph. 2:10. We are not saved by works, but we are saved "unto good works." And God has ordained what these "good works" are!

In the past few weeks, both on Sundays and also on Tuesdays, I have had several occasions to talk about the meaning of "works" in the Christian life. Let me repeat what I have been saying: "Works" are not just preaching, or teaching, or holding some office in the church. Those surely are works. But "works" are more inclusive than that. Our works are the things we do throughout every day, the things we do, the words we speak, even the thoughts we think! Paul told the Colossian servants that in their menial tasks they were serving the Lord Christ and that they would be rewarded in heaven for what they did on their jobs, and how they did their work!

Now the Bible does not tell us individually what we ought to do for our life work should be. The Lord shows us that by the abilities that He gives us, by the desires he puts in our hearts, and by the way in which He works providentially in our circumstances. But He does tell us how we are to work, and what principles of truth should be manifested in our work! So this means that whether you are a business man, a housewife, a student, a secretary in some office, an electrician, a teacher, or whatever you may be, you are to live for the Lord, and you are serving the Lord, just as much as anyone else is. Cf. Col. 3:24. The child of God does these "good works" as his life, and he is to carry on his good works as God has ordained. And so we do not choose how we are to live. God has ordained all of that, and it is recorded for us in the Word, in chapters like Ephesians 4.

So in talking about our walk, I am talking about things that apply to every single one of us, not just for Sunday, but for every day in the week, and not just for what we do, but also for what we are. We do what we do because of what God has

done in our hearts and because of the changes He is continually making in all of us.

So let us turn to verses 17 through 19 of Ephesians 4. And the first thing we have is:

#### I. THE COMMANDMENT.

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk." "Ye" is plural, and emphatic. Paul meant all of you!

This is the commandment. Note that it is not just a request. It is not something that Paul said they could do, or not do. It is a commandment. And it has been binding upon every Christian from that day until this! In fact, Paul was not the first to say this. It was emphasized very, very strongly in the Law under which the nation Israel lived for 1,500 years! The prophets of the OT spoke of this. Our Lord spoke of this. It was preached by the apostles and prophets of the NT. And it was to be the message of the church from the day that the NT was finally completed until the Lord comes again.

Who are the Gentiles? They are (and were) Gentiles who did not know the Lord. Paul did not include the Jews here because the Ephesian church was predominantly, and probably almost exclusively a Gentile church. They were Gentiles who had come to know the Lord. And while they once lived just like everybody else in the world, they were "henceforth" to walk that way no longer!

Paul had been speaking about those who were "children" in the faith, and that the leaders of the church were to be concerned about their spiritual growth. This meant that they were to grow out of their old ways into an entirely new way of living. If they were to do that, they could not, and must not, live like the unregenerate people of Ephesus.

Change the name from Ephesus to Portland, or to Vancouver, or Beaverton, or Gresham, or whatever your community might be, and the message is the same. Do not pattern your life after the way non-Christians live. In fact, you cannot pattern your life after many professing Christians because they are not living the way they ought to be living. They are living like the people of the world live.

And to emphasize the importance of what Paul was saying, he not only said that he was saying it (as an Apostle-- 1:1), but that he was testifying "in the Lord"! This

meant that Paul's message not only came by apostolic authority, but, as by an apostle, it came by divine revelation! This is stated as the very Word of God. It was not to be debated, but to be believed and obeyed. God expects our lives to be lived His way, not our way.

Now this brings us to:

## II. MAN'S CHIEF PROBLEM.

I refer to the words at the end of verse 17, " . . . in the vanity of their mind."

"Vanity" is the Greek word which means that at life's end there is nothing to show that is of lasting, eternal value from all that has been done. One Greek authority (Thayer, p. 393) uses the word depraved, meaning that the mind is perverted and perverse, headed in the wrong direction. It does not mean that non-Christians are empty-headed, stupid, without any intelligence at all. Many of them are very brilliant, have keen minds. But all of them have their minds full of something. But the problem is this: Their supposed intelligence and diligence leads them nowhere! All of their life-long efforts are fruitless; they result in nothing. Perhaps the best definition of "vanity" that we have is to see the way it is used in the Book of Ecclesiastes where Solomon moved from seeking wisdom to pleasure to riches (perhaps not in that order), but he found that all was "vanity, and vexation of spirit."

The average non-Christian is thinking just of this life. He gives no thought to the future life. If he does think about it, his thoughts are corrupted. And yet time is insignificant in its duration in comparison with eternity. And the person who amasses the greatest wealth, and attains the greatest power or notoriety, and who achieves the greatest successes, will find that all of that has taken him nowhere when he comes to the end of his life here on earth.

Remember that Paul said in Ephesians 2:3 that all of formerly were "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind"--and one is a worthless as the other!

A Christian has a renewed mind. So he is not to follow people who are just like he used to be when he was headed in the wrong direction and wasting his life on things that really did not count.

How thankful we should be for what God has done to our minds? Do you remember that verse from Isaac Watts' hymn (#271)

which goes like this?

Why was I made to hear thy voice,  
And enter while there's room,  
While thousands make a wretched choice,  
And rather starve than come?

Now that raises a question: WHY ARE PEOPLE LIKE THAT? WHY WILL THEY MAKE SUCH FOOLISH CHOICES, AND ALL OF THE TIME THINKING THAT THEY ARE RIGHT?

### III. THE EXPLANATION.

All that follows is an explanation, an exposition, an expansion of why man is the way that he is, vain in his thoughts, corrupted and headed in the wrong direction, so perverse that nothing can change him.

There are four reasons.

#### A. His understanding is darkened.

He was born this way. It was not the result of something that happened to him sometime afterwards.

The understanding includes not only the way a person thinks, how he is able to reason, but also his emotions—how he feels and what he desires. All of this is covered with darkness, without any light. Man's thoughts and reasonings and feelings and desires have all been affected by sin, and so he might be very brilliant in worldly matters, yet utterly wrong and incapable of thinking correctly about God and eternity—that which matters the most.

His plight here is hopeless.

#### B. "Being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them."

What does this mean?

Those Gentiles had physical life. They were very much alive in that sense. But they did not have "the life of God," they were spiritually dead. "The life of God" is God's life, eternal life. Cf. Eph. 2:12 and see what it means to be "alienated." Also Col. 1:21,

And you, that were sometime alienated  
and enemies in your mind by wicked works,  
yet now hath he reconciled.

So by nature Gentiles (and Jews) are estranged from God, at enmity with Him, cut off, separated. And

this was because of "the ignorance that was in them." Thus man's problem is internal. If he has external problems, it is because of the lack of understanding that is within him. He not only does not know the truth, but he is incapable of knowing it. And yet it is only the truth that can set him free.

The last phrase of verse can be considered as a part of what we have just considered, or considered separately. Let us look at it by itself.

C. "Because of the blindness of their heart."

"Blindness" here is one of those Old English words which has changed meaning since the KJV was translated. The word Paul used here means lit. to be covered with a callus, or to be hardened. This is what we often see when we talk to people about the Lord. They do not want to hear; they are not interested in hearing about Christ.

It is true that people who do not know the Lord are spiritually blinded and cannot understand spiritual truth. But that was not Paul's emphasis here. He was saying that down in the very center of man's being, in his heart, he is callused toward the truth of God. He will not, and cannot, be receptive to the truth of the Gospel.

This last point in verse 19 can, in a sense, be taken as the result of all that Paul had just said, or another description of "the vanity of their mind." Let us take it as the latter.

D. "Who being past feeling . . ."

We now see that man's condition bring him to a place of despair and of moral insensibility (so Salmon, EGT, III, p. 340).

As Romans 1 so clearly shows, when God is shut out of the lives of men, they give themselves over to greater and greater sin. Thus we see that man is not only a sinner by nature, but a sinner by choice as he shows his preference for sin and his rejection of God and the Gospel. And two sins stand out in what Paul mentioned here:

- 1) Sexual sins.
- 2) Covetousness, which usually is focused upon money, the love of which, in turn, is "the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10a).

A dark picture gets even darker as Paul shows us what



man will finally do to himself, showing that the Scriptural picture given to us here of the nature of man is absolutely true. Man himself proves that he is justly condemned before God.

Concl: Now we have had this dark, hopeless, corrupt picture of those "other Gentiles," who are just what the Ephesian saints used to be, and just what all of us used to be by nature--and which probably, some still are! Let us go back what Paul said at the beginning of verse 17.

He said that he was saying, and the the Lord was saying through him, that the Ephesian saints were not to live like that any longer! Can you imagine anyone wanting to live without God, without Christ, without the Holy Spirit, without salvation, without hope after he has once tasted of the joys of salvation? What a shame it is upon us that Paul would have to write such words as we have been considering today! Pray that God will make you like our Lord Who loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and that we will show by our lives the difference that it makes in a person's life when he knows the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Only God can make us what we ought to be, and need to be, and should want to be.

But you must be saying as you look as these verses, How can people ever be saved if that is our condition by nature? The answer has already been given to us in chapter 2. Read the first seven verses again. The difference between what we were and what we are now is forcibly set forth in those powerful words, little but powerful, "BUT GOD . . ." So I say to any of you who are still without Christ, do not look to yourself for a way of escape. You will only see that which will bring you to deeper and deeper despair. Look to God. Seek His mercy. Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have Him as your Saviour, your darkness will turn to light, and the vanity of your life will be turned toward that which will bring you eternal joy and eternal blessing through the Lord Jesus Christ Who died to save sinners from their sins. Trust Him now. He will save you, and He is the only One Who can!

THE OLD MAN AND THE NEW  
Ephesians 4:20-24

Intro: In thinking of our lives as Christians, it is very common for believers to think primarily about their own personal fellowship with the Lord, but not about the larger picture that Paul presented as he began this practical section of Ephesians at the beginning of chapter 4. There, undoubtedly, he intended that there should be a message for each individual believer, telling them what they should do. But his words in verse 3 definitely point us to that larger goal: that which we are to seek in our relationship with all other believers. Listen to it again: **"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."** Thus, each individual believer not only needed to be concerned about how he walked before the Lord, but he needed to be concerned also about how he walked before the other Ephesian believers.

He gave this larger view also in verse 13 of this chapter where he wrote, **"Till we all come in the unity of the faith . . . unto a perfect man . . ."** This "perfect man" is what the whole body of believers is to become together!

PAUL WAS DEFINITELY TEACHING IN EPHESIANS THE TRUTH CONCERNING THE WHOLE BODY OF CHRIST. This is the larger picture that we all need to have.

However, having said that, let me also point out that just as he said things at the beginning of chapter 4 which have individual and personal significance, the same is true as we come down to verses 17 through 19, and then on into the verses that I would like to consider with you today in verses 20 through 24. IF THE LARGER GOAL IS TO BE REACHED (AND, BY THE GRACE OF GOD IT WILL), THEN SPECIAL ATTENTION NEEDS TO BE GIVEN TO THE WAY EACH AND EVERY CHILD OF GOD IS LIVING HIS LIFE FROM DAY TO DAY.

So, as we saw last week in verses 17-19, none of us can afford to live like unregenerate Gentiles live, that is, like people live who do not know the Lord, BUT OUR LIVES MUST BE DIFFERENT. Verses 17 through 19 tell us how we are not to live; verses 20 through 24 tell us how we are to begin to walk, to live, in the right way.

Therefore, as we come to verse 20, and verse 21, Paul spoke of:

I. THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST TO BELIEVERS (Eph. 4:20, 21).

If you will look at the verbs in these two verses you will see that Paul wrote of:

- 1) Learning Christ.

- 2) Hearing Christ.
- 3) Being taught by Christ.

If we were to put them in their chronological order, we would list them in this way:

- 1) Being taught by Christ.
- 2) Hearing Christ.
- 3) Learning Christ.

Here is something that you may not have realized before. Paul told those Ephesian saints that all of them had been taught by Christ, all of them had heard Christ. and all of them had learned Christ!

What did he mean by this?

He meant that when the Lord Jesus Christ saves us, bringing us to Himself, He personally instructs us concerning this new life into which we have entered. He does not leave that up to others. He may do it in part through others. But there is a personal ministry that the Lord Jesus Christ has to every person who is truly saved. He teaches us, we hear Him, and we learn!

What does He teach us?

He teaches us of Himself. Noting the title and the Name that are given here, He begins to show us that He is both "Christ" and "Jesus." And this is the only time in the entire Epistle that we have the Name, "Jesus," used by itself! This teaching does not all come at once, but the instruction begins, we hear what He is saying, and we learn the truth as it is "in Jesus"! And this is what He begins to teach us right away: He begins to teach us that our lives from that point on can never be the same again! I am not speaking of the person who merely makes a profession of faith, but who is not saved. I am speaking of those who are really born again, people in whom the Spirit of God has done a redeeming work, people who have passed out of the darkness of sin into the light of the transforming Gospel of Christ. The Lord teaches. He knows how to make us hear, and He sees to it that we begin to learn that the life of a Christian is altogether different from the way those "other Gentiles walk," and from the way that we all used to walk. Cf. Eph. 2:1-3, and 11, 12.

If you will think back over your own life as a Christian, you probably will remember that, although you may not have been where you were getting much Bible teaching at all, yet certain convictions began to grow in your heart concerning the new way in which you needed to live. What

was happening? Exactly what Paul said here: Christ was teaching you, you were hearing Him, and you were learning things that you had never known before.

As I have said, the Lord may have used some older Christian, or you may have started learning this directly from the Lord, through His Word. But the point that Paul was making was that, although they needed to be reminded of this, yet he was not telling them anything that they did not already realize in hearts was the truth!

Notice that Paul spoke of learning Christ. Just what does this include?

It certainly means learning about Him. It means learning what He taught. But it means even more than that. It means learning how our lives have been united with His, how, in fact, He is our life! He is not just Someone we go to when we are in trouble or facing some need. We do that. But we learn that we are in Him, and He in us. We learn to live in Him. We learn that all of our resources to make us what He intends for us to be comes from Him, and from Him alone!

That is the first point that Paul made.

Secondly, he went on to speak more specifically of the things that the Lord teaches us all, things, by the way, which the leaders of the church need to be teaching and repeating over and over again. These are lessons that we see all through the Word of God.

## II. THE THREE LESSONS (Eph. 4:22-24).

We have the first one in verse 22, the second lesson in verse 23, and the third in verse. 24.

We could state them this way:

- 1) "Put off."
- 2) "Be renewed."
- 3) "Put on."

The first speaks of something we "put off" and never put on again. The last speaks of something we "put on" and never take off. The renewal is something that is going on from the time we are saved until we are taken to be with the Lord either through death or when the Lord comes.

Let us look at the first one.

A. "Put off" (Eph. 4:22). (Read the verse.)

Remember that our "conversation" is the way we live. And so "the old man" is the person that we used to be and the way that we used to live. Paul told the Roman church that "our old man is (was) crucified with" Christ (Rom. 6:6) ". . . that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Didn't Paul say in 2 Cor. 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature . . ."? It is impossible for us to be the same again after we have been saved.

And so we must recognize that we cannot go back. We must "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). There may be times when we will fail, but we will never be satisfied living like we lived before Christ saved us. If "our old man" was "crucified with Christ," then our old life was taken care of as well as our sins when our Lord died on the Cross.

As long as we lived in our sins, in the old way, our lives were being corrupted more and more because of the way we were continually being deceived by the lusts, the desires we had, which, as we saw in verse 17, were always leading us to go the wrong way. We were deceived again and again and again and again!

So the true Christian realizes in his heart, says so with his lips, and shows in his life, that he is through with the old life.

The second lesson:

B. "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:23).

This renewal is a process that is continually going on. As we grow in our knowledge of the Lord and of His Word, so do our lives change. As we learn more about pleasing the Lord, our thinking, our minds, change. We think differently about life. We are no longer intent on satisfying our lusts, our desires; we have a greater desire to please the Lord, to do what will glorify Him.

Paul also spoke about this to the Roman church when in Romans 12:2 he said, "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed **by the renewing of your mind, . . .**"

This is why it is so important for us to be hearing the Word, and reading the Word, and really learning what the Lord has to say in His Word about what we

are to believe and how we are to live. To "be renewed" is to be continually learning new things which are different from what we ever knew before! WHAT ARE SOME OF THE NEW THINGS THAT YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM THE WORD OF GOD THIS PAST WEEK? This is a work that needs to be going on every day.

The third lesson:

C. "Put on" (Eph. 4:24).

Just as we are to "put off . . . the old man," so we are to "put on the new man." We have become a new person in Christ. We have a new life to live. And this new life has been created after God. What does this mean? Well, it means that the new life we are to live is a life that is like God. "Righteousness and true holiness" are attributes of God.

It is difficult to distinguish between "righteousness" and "holiness." When you read what different men have written about these, you realize that there is a wide difference of opinion, and so it might be best to say that they are practically the same, and yet there must be some difference.

I do not say that I have the answer, but I will give you what I think the Apostle Paul meant. I think he may have been saying that when man was first created, He was created in the image and likeness of God. It is God's purpose in salvation to restore that image, and to go beyond what man was before he sinned. But, nevertheless, God's purpose is that we should become like He is: righteous and holy. For us this would mean that what we are and what we do is to be, first of all, pleasing to Him. That is what righteousness is. We no longer determine what is right for ourselves. God determines that. We seek to be like He is. And to be holy means that we are separated from sin, seeking to live like He wants us to live.

Therefore, I would say that "righteousness and true holiness" emphasizes the need (1) to be what He wants us to be, and (2) to do what He wants us to do (which also includes not doing what He does not want us to do).

So to "put on the new man" is to seek by the grace of God, as our minds are being renewed, to direct all of our energies toward the ultimate goal of our salvation: likeness to God and to Christ.

Illus: Paul's testimony in Phil. 3, esp. in verse 14: "I press toward the mark . . ."

Concl: This passage is a good passage by which we can judge the reality of our faith in Christ. I suppose that practically all of us here today have at some time and in some way, professed faith in Christ. Perhaps you were alone, or maybe it was as you were listening to the Gospel being proclaimed. Perhaps some of you received the Lord when your parents, or some friend, was telling you about the Saviour. Whatever the circumstances may have been, have you noticed in your own heart a desire since then to break with the life you had been living. Did you start to want to live a life that was pleasing to God? Did you search the Scriptures to find out what it was that the Lord wanted you to be, and do? Or are your desires this morning about the same that they have always been. Is it the case that you enjoy the teaching of the Word, but you can forget about it during the week? Do you want to be like the Lord Jesus Christ? Is your life controlled by your desires, or by the will of God?

The answers to these questions will either add to your assurance that you are saved, or they will make you realize that you are still without Christ and without eternal life, that your heart has never been changed. If that is the case, I trust that this very day the Lord will save you, and that you will come in repentance and faith to Christ.

Perhaps you never professed to be a Christian, but you are here today because you know that you need help. Perhaps some sin is ruining your life. Christ is the One you need. He not only saves from one or two sins, but from all sin. And His promise is that, if you come to Him, He will not turn you away.

May God put in the hearts of all of us who know Him a renewed desire to live for Him. And may our hearts be open to what we are going to be learning from the rest of this Epistle as we discover from the Word what a life of righteousness and holiness really is.

THE FIRST STEPS  
Ephesians 4:25-28

Intro: It is amazing to see how much ground the writers of Scripture cover in the scope of a very few words. This is one of the outstanding characteristics of the Word of God. You do not have to read a lot to get a lot. One verse, often one phrase from a verse, sometimes even one word, holds a wealth of truth which can never be fully exhausted. This is one of the unmistakable marks of the divine origin of the Word of God.

It would not be a difficult thing to spend one Sunday morning on each verse of Ephesians. On some of the verses, we could spend several Sundays. The more the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to the riches of the Word of God, the more we see. One of the things that Paul said in this Epistle about his own ministry is that which we have in Ephesians 3:8. (Read.)

We are going to see something of the riches to be found in the Word again today as we look into just four verses from Ephesians 4: verses 25, 26, 27, and 28.

Each verse has a separate theme. Each verse is very practical. Here Paul was, in a sense, telling the Ephesian believers what some of THE FIRST STEPS in the Christian life should be. And all four verses, with all of the others that follow them, indicate very clearly that the Christian is to be uniquely different in the life that he lives!

We have been listening to and looking at and reading about what is being said about the nomination of John Tower for the position of Secretary of Defense for our country. Many charges and counter-charges have been made back and forth. But the interesting thing about all that has been going on is that it has raised an issue that has been raised before, and it is this: What significance does a man's private life have upon his ability and his right to be a public servant? If a man is immoral, if he is a drinker, does this disqualify him from public service?

I am not passing judgment upon Senator Tower, but I was really disturbed by the remark of one former candidate for the presidency of the United States who said that if this were applied to all the public servants in Washington, eliminating those who were guilty, we would not have a government! If this is true, then we really need to seek the mercy of God upon us, and pray that men would repent of their sins before the judgment of God falls upon us. If this is true, then it is later than we think as far as our nation is concerned.



And so the conclusion that many of those men would come to is that a man's personal life really has nothing to do with his ability and right to serve. Men can say this because they have no fear of God in their hearts. In fact, God does not enter into their thinking at all. Sin is not a word in their vocabulary. They feel free to do whatever they want to do, and what they do is nobody else's business--so they say!

But is that true?

I personally think that it is regrettable that people drag out all of the sin in a person's life and spread the information all over the world. We know that everybody is a sinner. We all stand condemned before a holy God. But I am speaking of the person who, given such a trust as we put into the hands of our governmental leaders, continues to carry on in a way that is very clearly displeasing to God. Over the past years we have probably listened to a lot of false accusations. And many people have been hurt unjustly. But the question remains, What should we expect of our leaders as far as their personal lives are concerned?

Let us face this question as Christians.

I hope that it has been indelibly impressed upon your mind that, if a person is a Christian, his life will be different. It must be different. If it is not different, if it is not a changed life, if there is not evidence of divine holiness in his life, then he is not a Christian. And, as far as leadership is concerned, you would not have those qualifications given in the Word of God for leaders if their personal lives were not very, very important. It is a Christian's personal life that either qualifies him, or disqualifies him, for the service of the Lord.

And as far as public servants are concerned, the Bible says that they are the ministers of God (cf. Rom. 13:4). Not all of them know the Lord as Savior, but no public servant really understands his job if he does not realize that he is primarily responsible to God for the way he lives and for the way he carries on his work. And God is very, very concerned about the way people live.

Now let us go back to our text, and to Paul's letter to the Ephesian church. He has had a great deal to say about how they used to live, and about how the people of the world to this very day still live! But he leaves no doubt in anyone's mind, if they are reading what he wrote, that the life of a Christian is going to be different from what he used to be.

Now where would you start? I have said that Paul spoke in these four verses of four different things. And I am

thinking of them today as some of THE FIRST STEPS that we need to take, and to keep taking, in our lives as the people of God. God not only expects kings and governmental leaders to be different, and pastors to be different, and church leaders to be different, BUT HE EXPECTS EVERY INDIVIDUAL CHILD OF GOD TO BE DIFFERENT!

And so he wrote, to begin with (and this is only the beginning, as much as we have time for today), of four things. Let me make them easy for you to remember. I have a heading for each verse that begins with the letter "t."

- 1) The tongue -- verse 25.
- 2) The temper -- verse 26.
- 3) The tempter -- verse 27.
- 4) The thief -- verse 28.

#### I. THE TONGUE (Eph. 4:25).

Those of us who are in our Tuesday Bible Class have been learning a lot about the tongue. We have learned that it can be an instrument of great good, OR IT CAN BE AN INSTRUMENT OF GREAT EVIL. We have learned, to state it briefly, that, as the tongue goes, so the person goes. We have learned that no man can tame the tongue, that it is "an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (Jas. 3:8). We have learned that "it is set on fire of hell" (Jas. 3:6). We have learned that the tongue is in some way connected with every other sin that we commit. So when Paul began with the tongue, he was getting down to the basic problem that we all have.

Man by nature is a liar. We are all guilty. Dishonesty has become a way of life in America, hasn't it? We have dishonesty in government, in the military, in business, in the stock market, in sports, in education, in our homes. Dishonesty, lying, is all around us. And the same was true in Paul's day. What Paul said about the Cretians was true also of the Ephesians. He wrote to Titus, "The Cretians are always liars, evil beast, slow bellies" (Tit. 1:12).

Lying is bad enough when we lie to strangers, but it is even worse when we lie to each other. Note how Paul concluded this 25th verse. (Read.) If we lie to each other when we are members of each other in the body of Christ, we are hurting others even as we hurt ourselves. IF THERE IS ONE PERSON WHOSE WORD YOU SHOULD ALWAYS BE ABLE TO TRUST, IT IS THE WORD OF A CHRISTIAN.

Perhaps this is a good subject for us to take up at this time of the year when we are making out our tax reports. A Christian should be scrupulously honest. Avoid a lie

like you would a plague.

Paul began the same way when he was writing to the Colossian church. Listen to what he said:

Lie not one to another,  
 seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds,  
 And have put on the new man,  
 which is renewed in knowledge  
 after the image of him that created him  
 (Col. 3:9, 10).

Long ago the Lord told the children of Israel, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Ex. 20:16).

Dr. Ironside once said to us in one of our classes at the Seminary, "Always tell the truth, and then you don't have to remember what you said."

Sometimes even Christians will try to justify a lie, but a lie is never right in God's sight.

## II. THE TEMPER (Eph. 4:26).

Some would tell us that it is a sin if we ever get angry. But obviously the Apostle Paul did not think so. Paul indicates by this command that there are times when it would be a sin NOT to be angry! When we see false teachers leading people astray, shouldn't we be angry? When we see preachers and evangelists robbing widows, shouldn't we be angry? When we see little children abused, shouldn't we be angry? When we hear men blaspheming the name of our God, shouldn't we be angry? If a person is holy, there are certain things that will make him angry.

BUT we must be careful that anger does not lead us to sin! There is a wrong kind of anger, anger which is the result of someone else bothering us, or saying unkind things about us; anger that leads us to do things to people, or to say things about people, that are just as bad as they have done. There are times when we need to be angry, but, at the same time, we need to know that it is so easy for anger to lead to sin.

What is one way that we can safeguard ourselves against anger that leads to sin? It is by making sure that we do not go to bed angry. This is especially good for a husband and wife to remember. And it is good for parents to remember in dealing with their children. It is good for all of us to remember at all times. Things may not be completely settled in a day's time, but let us make

sure that we do not carry over this day's problem into tomorrow.

This verse may be taken from the Greek translation of Psalm 4:4. The KJV says, "Stand in awe, and sin not," but the LXX says,

Be angry, and sin not:  
 commune with your own heart upon your bed,  
 and be still. Selah.

This would seem to suggest that not letting the sun go down upon your wrath can be accomplished by what you do to get your heart calm before you go to bed. We never know when we go to bed at night whether or not we will still be alive the next morning. Neither do we know if the person that we are angry with will be alive the next day. What a lot of heartaches and regrets would be avoided if we carefully obeyed the Lord on this point!

Forgiveness ought to bring joy to the heart of any child of God, even forgiving others in our hearts before they ask for it. The Lord did this from the Cross for the Jews and Romans even when there was no sign that they were sorry.

### III. THE TEMPTER (Eph. 4:27).

In our English translation there are only six words in this verse. In the Greek there are only five! But how very important this is.

When we get to Eph. 6:10-20 we are going to learn a great deal about our warfare with the Devil, but here we have this brief, simple statement. Perhaps it is a part of verse 26. Staying angry with anyone or about anything gives the Devil the opportunity that he is always waiting for. It is easy for a trial to become a temptation.

The Devil is the great Tempter. One writer said that whenever the Devil finds a heart shut against God he finds a heart open to sin (adapted from a quote by Moule, p. 232). We are victorious over the Devil when we resist him, when we "stand against" him (see Jas. 4:7; Eph. 6:11). By disobeying the Lord we play right into the hands of the Devil. Therefore, sinning always leads to more sinning. Disobedience in one thing leads to disobedience in other things. How we need to pray that the Lord will keep us walking in the truth! The Lord Jesus Christ, in His time of temptation, is a great Example to us of what it means to resist the Devil.

### IV. THE THIEF (Eph. 4:28).

The Bible is not a friend to the lazy, slothful person. So often the thief is a sluggard. He tries to get by thievery what it ought to get by good, honest hard work. He takes from others who have worked for what they have so that he will not have to work. The Bible encourages all of us to work.

Instead of thinking about what we can get, we need to be thinking about what we can give!

Concl: So what kind of a picture do we get of a Christian from just these four verses?

He is a person whose word you can trust. He is a person who will get angry at sin, but he does not stay angry. He is approachable and forgiving. He is careful about sin in his own life, and he works so he will not even be tempted to steal. And he delights to help others so that the temptation to steal will not become too great for them.

In the book of Proverbs, the 30th chapter was written by Agur, the son of Jakeh. He requested two things from the Lord. This is the way he expressed it:

Two things have I required of thee;  
deny me them not before I die:  
Remove far from me vanity and lies:  
give me neither poverty nor riches;  
feed me with food convenient for me:  
Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say,  
Where is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal,  
and take the name of my God in vain (Prov. 30:7-9).

His words teach us two important things:

- 1) That we are all prone to do the very things that Paul has forbidden in our text. And we need to remember this.
- 2) That only the Lord change us from what we are by nature, and so we need to pray daily as Agur prayed, that the Lord will keep us walking in obedience to His Word so that by our lives we will honor Him, showing to the World what He has done in our hearts.

Learn these first steps. And then keep taking them. Such obedience not only prevents sin, but leads us on to greater heights of holiness through His grace and power.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT TO YOU?  
Ephesians 4:29-32

Intro: There is a great deal of controversy today over the question, What is the Gospel? In our desire to get people to confess Christ as their Saviour, have we neglected to point out the importance of repentance? Have we failed to point out what the Scriptures teach so clearly that, if you are a true Christian, your life will show it? Is it possible for a person to be saved and yet go on living the same kind of life?

John MacArthur, in his new book, The Gospel According To Jesus, has raised these question, and then has insisted that the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Gospel which our Lord preached, and which the Apostles preached, is a Gospel which causes men to turn from their sins, and to live a new kind of life, a godly life, a life that is pleasing to God. He does not deny that Christians will sin, that they will fail. But he does say that if you claim that Jesus Christ is your Savior, you will have no argument with the teaching that He is also the Lord of your life.

I agree with the point that John MacArthur has made in his new book, and I hope that, if you have not read it, you will get it and read it. It has a message, I believe, which is sorely needed today. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church,

Therefore if any man be in Christ,  
he is a new creature:  
old things are passed away;  
behold, all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

And later the Apostle John wrote,  
He that saith, I know him,  
and keepeth not his commandments,  
is a liar, and the truth is not in him.  
But whoso keepeth his word,  
in him very is the love of God perfected:  
hereby know we that we are in him  
(1 John 2:4, 5).

We are considering together here in our Sunday morning services, Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. We have come to the practical section of the Book. What other explanation can we give to Paul's exhortations than that he believed that saving faith is accompanied by a transformed life?

The last eight verses of Ephesians 4 are all practical, very pointedly practical. He did not want them to continue on in a state of spiritual infancy. He wanted them to grow. Verses 17 through 24 clearly indicate that they not only should not, but could not, live like they had lived before they were saved. Then in verses 25-32, and on into chapter 5, he told them how they were to live.

Before we start with verse 29, let me make some general observations about this latter part of chapter 4.

Paul was telling the Ephesians of his day, and all believers from that day until this, how they were to live. He did this both positively and negatively.

Negatively he said two things here:

- 1) Do not live the way you formerly lived, the way you then wanted to live (and still have inclinations to live that way).
- 2) Do not live the way "the devil" still wants you to live. That is the meaning of that twenty-seventh verse: "Neither give place to the devil." Formerly you were in bondage to him, but you are not in bondage to him any longer. So do not give him an inch in which to get at you!

So Paul was saying very positively that you are not to live the way you used to live.

On the positive side he said this (and you will find it in the second verse of our text for today: verse 30):

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

This thirtieth verse could be attached to all of the other eight verses at the end of chapter 4. E.g., put away lying because you are not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, etc.

This is the second time that the sealing of the Holy Spirit has been mentioned in this Epistle. Cf. Eph. 1:13, 14.

What does it mean to us that we, all of us who have Christ as our Saviour, have been sealed by the Holy Spirit? It means that we have been marked as belonging to the Lord. It guarantees that our salvation is secure, and that we will be finally and completely saved.

The Holy Spirit Himself is that seal. And to guarantee that that work of salvation will be completed, He personally supervises our spiritual growth. So we are not to grieve Him?

What does it mean to grieve Him?

to frustrate

It means that we can displease Him by seeking the very purpose for which He indwells us. This is what we are doing when we do what we want to do, and what the Devil wants us to do, instead of doing what the Holy Spirit wants us to do, and will enable us to do--the things that He has told us to do in the Word of God. Every violation of the word, positively or negatively, grieves the Holy Spirit. The object of our lives as Christians is that we must not grieve the Holy Spirit. To grieve Him is to

grieve both the Father and the Lord Jesus as well.

To grieve not the Holy Spirit of God is another way of saying that we are to live in the fear of the Lord, fearful lest we do that which will cause grief to God. We have no other goal than that we seek to please the Lord in all things FIRST OF ALL!

Now, having said that, where did Paul start in these last eight verses? Where are we most likely to displease the Lord, and how should we begin this new life in which it is our privilege to please Him?

The starting-place is for us to be concerned about how we use our tongues, what we say, and how we say what we say.

Do you remember what James said about the tongue, and about controlling the tongue? Cf. James 3:1-12.

And what did our Lord say in Matthew 12:33-37? (Read.)

It is possible for a person to be a hypocrite with his tongue, but sooner or later the truth will come out! We may try to hide our true selves, but eventually the truth will be spoken by our own lips. It may be in a fit of anger. It may be due to a frustration. It may be in a time of passion. But our mouths are the great revealers of what we are.

Now look at our text. Verse 29 has to do with the mouth.

Verse 31 has to do with the mouth.

Verse 32 involves the mouth as well.

We have two possibilities expressed in verse 29. We also have two possibilities expressed in verses 31 and 32. Let us consider them in order.

#### I. THE FIRST EXHORTATION WITH TWO POSSIBILITIES (Eph. 4:29).

- A. The first possibility: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth."

Paul was excluding "corrupt communications" of all kinds. This could include profanity. It could be lying. It could be a dirty story. Or it could be anything that is worthless. Nothing is ever to go out of our mouths that would be a moral setback to anyone who hears us. If it is going to harm the person you are speaking to, or the person you are speaking about, don't say it!

- B. The other possibility: "But that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."



It is clear that good speech is edifying speech, and edifying speech is speech that ministers "grace" to those we speak to.

What is the best example of edifying speech that you and I have? It is the Word of God itself! This is what Paul was saying about the Word in 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. There are no "corrupt" communications in Scripture. God never loses sight of our need to be edified, and He does not want us to lose sight of that either. There may be times when we need to warn people. We may even need to rebuke them. There surely are times when people need to be instructed and encouraged.

But we always need to be asking ourselves, "What good purpose in God's sight will be accomplished if I say what I am about to say?" If you can't see any good, then don't say it! BUT BE ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SAY THINGS THAT WILL BE HELPFUL SPIRITUALLY.

Paul is actually saying here, Always leave people better off when you leave them than they were when you met them.

The Lord redeemed all of you--body, soul, and spirit. Your tongue belongs to Him. Therefore, use your tongue for the glory of God and for the blessing of the people you are talking to, at home, or anyplace else!

If you and I are talking to those who are not believers in Christ, we should always be thinking of something to say that will be of spiritual benefit to them. It is not that we are to be preaching at people all of the time, but we should affect people like the Lord did; the people "wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth" (Luke 4:22).

But not let us look at verses 31 and 32.

## II. THE SECOND EXHORTATION WITH ITS TWO POSSIBILITIES (Eph. 4: 31, 32).

### A. The first possibility--forbidden (v. 31).

All that Paul mentioned here we can classify as attitudes, or emotions, but with most, if not all, of them our tongues get involved.

1. "Bitterness" -- In Rom. 3:14 Paul spoke of the natural man with these words: "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." It speaks of anything

that is sharp or disagreeable or harsh.

Heb. 12:15 speaks of a "root of bitterness." From the way Peter used this word about Simon who had been a sorcerer in Acts 8:23 about him being in "the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," it would seem that this is any rebellion about God's ways with us.

2. "Wrath" -- Not the "wrath" that is allowed, according to v. 26, which is an irritation or an exasperation, but here he was speaking of the kind of wrath which leads to a feeling of revenge, and often, although not always, can lead to murder. Such "wrath" is never right for a Christian.
3. "Anger" -- This can be disguised from the former word in that this is a sudden passion in which a person "blows his top," and then settles down again. The former word ("wrath") is an attitude which continues on day after day.

These two passions, "wrath" and "anger," are the strongest of all passions, but are never permitted for the child of God.

4. "Clamour" -- This is a loud outcry, and the issuance of demands which have to be met. This condemns many of the protests that Christians get involved in. This would prohibit a Christian from causing trouble in a strike, and probably from taking part in a strike at all. It would condemn the sower of discord. No churches would ever be split if the people of God obeyed this word.
5. "Evil speaking" -- This is the word blasphemy. It has reference to speaking which is hurtful to the reputation of other people. And it certainly includes any irreverent reference to God, including swearing.
6. "With all malice" -- indicating that this has to go, too. This word does not necessarily include any action, but just the disposition, the desire to see someone hurt. In contrast with "wrath," this is the attitude that would not commit the murder, but it would be glad if someone else would.

These attitudes, and the words which almost always accompany them, are never right for the child of God. They must be put away, and never be brought back into action again.

Now let us turn to . . .

- B. The other possibility--which must become an actuality (v. 32).

Notice that Paul was especially concerned about the way believers treated each other.

He focused upon three things, and then gave the pattern which we are to follow.

1. "Be ye kind one to another."

This word is translated "gracious" in 1 Pet. 2:3. It is the opposite of being bitter or harsh or judgmental. It is being gracious, mild, pleasant, helpful.

2. "Tenderhearted" -- A good translation. The opposite of hardhearted. This expresses the continuing attitude you have toward someone you love very much. It is to be full of sympathy, even ready to explain away the failures and sins of others.

3. "Forgiving one another" -- And this is to be done even before the offending party asks for forgiveness. Like the father of the prodigal son did. This kind of a person will try to cover up the sin as though it never happened, and will never refer to it again.

It even includes forgiving a person when the offense has not been against us.

And what is our example?

"Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." God, the offended One, made the provision at the price of the death of His Son. The forgiveness was full. It was forever. It would never be brought up again.

Concl: Would it not be wonderful if all of us were to live like this? How different our lives would be! What wonderful fellowship we would have! And how the blessing of the Lord would abound in our fellowship and in our testimony to the world. How sweet would be our fellowship at the Lord's table. This is not the way the world lives. But this is the way we are to live. And when we do, the Spirit is not grieved, and the world is able to see what it means to be born again, the changes that the Lord makes in the lives of those who truly know Him as Savior and as Lord.