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C0506 -- Feb. 09, 2005 – Ephesians 4:25-32 - The New Lifestyle–Part 1

First, let's review the Old and New Man of Eph 4:20-24. Old Man/New Man Theology is simple on the one hand and complex on the other, so just stick in there and you'll get it.

But you have not learned Christ this way. The Ephesians did not learn the conduct of the pagan Gentiles. They did not learn the conduct of public **indecenty** and all **impurity** with self-centered **greediness** (v. 23). Instead they **learned Christ**. Unique to the NT is this statement of coming to learn a person. We can learn the person of Christ only because He bodily rose from the dead and bodily ascended to the right hand of the Father. He is not dead but alive. Therefore, we are not studying a historical relic but a living Person. *The learning of Christ cannot be reduced to a cold assimilation of facts about Him. It must be the warmth of developing a personal relationship with Him.*

And verse 21, **surely** the Ephesians had **heard Him and were taught in Him** for Paul had been with them for over 2 years teaching 5-6 hours a day in the School of Tyrannus. They **heard Christ** through the apostle Paul as we **hear Christ** through the pages of Scripture. They learned Christ personally at salvation and learned to know him as their personal Lord through subsequent teaching of Scripture. We come to know Christ as our personal Savior through hearing Him in Scripture and we come know Him more personally after that as we are taught **in Him**. Christ is both the object and the sphere of our learning. Paul goes on to say in so much as **truth is in Jesus**. Jesus Christ is the embodiment of truth. Jesus is the space-time manifestation of truth. The highest form of revelation God has given to mankind (Heb 1:1-3). When we come to know Him we come to know truth because He is the embodiment of truth (John 14:6).

One of the things the Ephesians had been taught was that **you have laid aside the old man according to the former lifestyle who is being corrupted in accordance with the desires coming from deceit**. The Ephesians lived in a very carnal city. They had the Temple of Artemis/Diana where drunken orgies took place. The city was a center of tourism and import/export. Silversmiths stood along the street known as the Arcadian Way and sold silver trinkets of the Temple as souvenirs to the tourists as they headed toward the bay. The city was a center of magic and occultism. So, you can see sin was a hot item in Ephesus. These pagan idolatries tempted their former self, their **old man**. Paul says, I taught you that **you have laid aside the old man** which is integrally connected with your **former lifestyle**. That **old man** was laid aside at the moment of your conversion. This is looking at the **old man** positionally, from God's perspective. Positionally, that guy is gone and that lifestyle should be gone. But we find that Paul says that our **former lifestyle is being corrupted in accordance with the desires coming from deceit**. The **old man is gone positionally**, but his lifestyle is still there experientially. The **old man is being corrupted**. So, the way this fleshes out is that we were once under the *penalty* and *power* of sin (we were slaves to sin Rom. 6:6). Sin was our master. Now we are free from the *penalty* and *power* of sin and freed to righteousness. We still await our being free from the *presence* of sin.

In the here and now Paul says in v. 23 that **you are being renewed by the spirit in your mind**. You are being renewed by the human spirit which is located in the human mind. 1) The Holy Spirit regenerates the human spirit so that the human spirit can receive the things of God. 2) We nourish our human spirits with the word of God and 3) in turn the human spirit renews the mind (v. 23).

Finally, in v. 24 Paul tells us **that you have put on the new man who has been created after God's likeness in righteousness and holiness that comes from truth**. You **have put on the new man**. This is not a command. The **new man** was put on at conversion, the same time the **old man** was laid aside (inceptive aorist + cf. Rom 6:6). The figure is of taking off and putting on a garment. We took off our **old man** and put on our **new man** at conversion. Whereas the **old man** was integrally connected with the old **lifestyle** so the **new man** is integrally connected with a **new lifestyle**. This is because the **new man...has been created after God's likeness**. And **God's likeness** is

that of **righteousness and holiness that comes from truth**. So, you are a new creature (2 Cor 5:17). The old has gone the new has come. Therefore, our lifestyle ought to reflect our new possession and belongings. That's what the rest of this chapter is about. Here come the commands in light of the positional truth Paul just expressed so powerfully.

In Eph 4:25-32 we have a series of five commands. Paul follows a definite structure that reflects the structure of OT wisdom literature. That structure looks like this:

- C- Don't do this
- C+ Instead do this
- M/R This is why

This is the principle of replacement. The word of God doesn't just say "no, no, no." The Bible is not a book that is designed to limit you. The Bible is a book that is designed to free you. God is not a BIG meanie who doesn't want you to have any fun. If that's the way you think about God then its obvious you've never closely read His word. You certainly haven't come to know Him very well. God created a 'form' for man to live in. When we operate within the 'form' there is 'freedom' and 'balance'.

FORM→FREEDOM→BALANCE

When we try to break out of that 'form' then we 'enslave ourselves' and cause 'chaos'. God doesn't want us to become 'enslaved' so He revealed the 'form'. That's what He's doing throughout Scripture. He's saying, this is the way things work, this is how you can have 'freedom' and 'balance', this is how to avoid being 'enslaved'. Since He created the 'form' He knows all about the 'form'. Therefore, when He tells us how to live in the 'form' He's being gracious. He's being kind enough to tell us ignoramus' what the 'form' is so we don't 'enslave' ourselves.

The pagan, the **old man** doesn't like God's 'form'. He wants to create a new 'form' where he makes the rules. He wants to be the Creator. He doesn't like the 'form' being imposed upon him so he tries to break out of the 'form'. Michelangelo demonstrated this humanism in his rock statues sculpted between 1519 and 1536. Look at this sculpture of "man tearing himself free from the rock."¹

So, God created the 'form', in that 'form' there is 'freedom' and when there is 'freedom' there is 'balance'. **Form, freedom and balance.** You want to remember those three words as we enter tonight's study on **The New Lifestyle.** I want you to stop trying to break out of the 'form' God expresses in the following verses because all it does is 'enslave' you and cause 'chaos'. The main theme of these verses is 'Change'. There must be a 'Change' of lifestyle now that you have put on the New Man at conversion.

Now, let's look at the structure that Paul uses here, a structure well known in the OT wisdom literature. C-, C+, and M/R

Therefore,

C- having laid aside falsehood,

C+ 'speak truth each one of you with his neighbor',

M because we are members of one another.

C+ Be angry and do not sin';

C- neither let the sun go down on your anger

M nor give place to the devil.

C- The stealer must no longer steal,

C+ but rather labor, working with his own hands that which is good,

M in order that he might have to share with the one who has a need.

Greek Text 4:25 Dio apothemenoi to pseudos laleite aletheian ekastos meta tou plesion autou oti esmen allelon mele

Translation 4:25 Therefore, having laid aside falsehood, 'speak truth each one of you with his neighbor', because we are members of one another.

Every time we see **Therefore** we ought to ask what is it there for? It is there for the express purpose of showing you how to apply the truth that you are a **new man**. Consider yourself a **new man** in Christ. You have already laid aside the **old man** and the old lifestyle. Now you are a **new man** and you have a new lifestyle.

C- having laid aside falsehood,
C+ ‘speak truth each one of you with his neighbor’,
M because we are members of one another.

The negative command is to **lay aside falsehood** (*pseudos*). The positive command is **speak truth** (*aletheia*). **Falsehood** is the opposite of **truth**. The motivation is **because we are members one of another**. First, the negative command “stop lying”. A key passage on “lying” is

John 8:44 "You are of *your* father the **devil**, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a **liar** and the father of lies.

Likewise, when we speak a lie we are speaking from our **old man**, but we are a **new man**. When we lie we are opposing the truth and because the devil is the “father of lies” it may be said that when we lie our father is the devil. Lying and telling the truth are opposites and come from opposite sources; **old man** and **new man** respectively. But we laid that **old man** aside at conversion so we should no longer lie.

Let’s talk about change for a moment. Let me teach this by using a child’s joke.

Q: When is a door not a door?

A: When it is ajar!

Now, that’s a funny child’s joke but it is an important tool for understanding biblical change. Let’s change the joke slightly to illustrate true biblical change.

Q: When is a door not a door?

A: When it is something else.

The Bible teaches that change does not come about only when certain *changes* take place. Change takes place when there has been a change in the person. Just because a liar is not actively lying does not mean he is no longer a liar. The change in behavior may be the result of a change in environment. Let’s

illustrate. Maybe I'm a compulsive liar. I lie to my parents or my spouse about all sorts of things. When I'm put in a new environment where my parents or spouse are not present I don't lie. I don't feel the need to lie. Am I no longer a liar? Not necessarily. When I'm put back in the environment with my parents or spouse and the pressure is on then we know if I've really changed or not. See, a change in my environment can greatly affect how one behaves temporarily. This is the basic approach of secular psychology. Change the environment and this will change the behavior. True. But what happens when they are put back in that environment and are confronted with those pressures? They typically go back to their old behavior patterns. True biblical change has not taken place. True biblical change has taken place only when there has been a change in the moral fabric of my lives so that I don't lie even when I'm around my parents or spouse. So, let's ask the question again in reference to lying.

Q: When is a liar no longer a liar?

Is the answer

A: When he stops lying?

No. There is no assurance whatever that a liar who is not lying has ceased to be a liar. It only indicates that for the moment he is not lying. Yet, at some more convenient time in the future when the pressure is on he finds himself in a totally different situation. "In other words, since thieves do not steal at all times, liars do not always lie, and drunks are not always drunk, cessation of these activities is (in itself) no indication that there has been a permanent change." (Adams, 176) Some change has taken place, maybe a change in environment, but the all important change has not taken place. The person himself has not been changed. So,

Q: When is a liar no longer a liar?

The Bible gives us the answer in Eph 4:25

Therefore, having laid aside falsehood, 'speak truth each one of you with his neighbor', because we are members of one another.

There you have it.

Q: When is a liar no longer a liar?

A: When he becomes a truth-teller.

And not until he becomes a truth-teller. When we become truth-tellers we as persons have been changed.ⁱⁱ We have changed from operating according to the **old man** to operating according to the **new man**. Importantly, Paul doesn't leave us without a *reason* or *motivation*. The reason is **because we are members of one another**. The context therefore is speaking truth within the church **because we are members of one another**. The Greek word for **members** (*melos*) is interesting because it is never used of "members of an organization or corporation". Instead it is uniquely used of "parts of an organism". The Church is not an organization or corporation but an organism. An organism is composed of parts that have a close-knit relationship to one another and are accountable to one another. All the parts are interdependent on one another. Nobody can get fired from the body of Christ because each member is uniquely gifted and necessary to preserve the organism (no loss of salvation). Why would we want to lie to one who we have such a close-knit, interdependent and accountable relationship with? Even though the context is speaking truth to believers we are to **speak truth** to everyone whether they are believers or not.

So, we've got a C- followed by a C+ (principle of replacement) and a motivation to follow the C+. This is biblical change. Now, let's turn to the second set of commands and motivations.

Greek Text 4:26-27 orgizesthe kai me amartanete. o elios me epidueto epi to parorgismo umon mede didote topon to diabolo

Translation 4:26-27 'Be angry and do not sin'; neither let the sun go down on your anger nor give place to the devil.

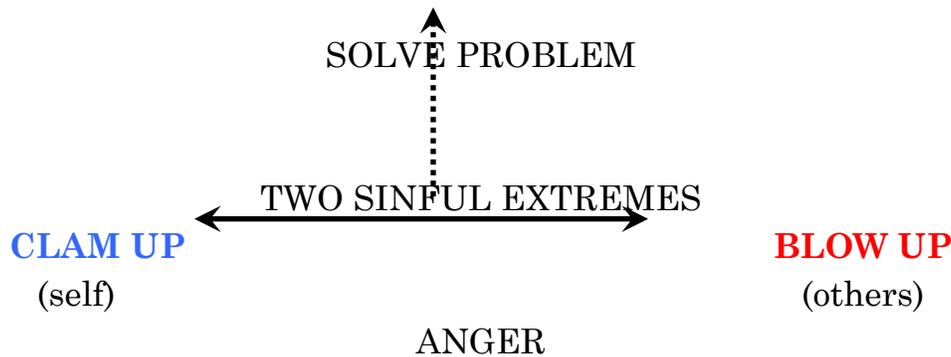
C+ Be angry and do not sin';

C- neither let the sun go down on your anger

M nor give place to the devil.

Here Paul states the positive command first and then the negative. The positive command is to **be angry and not sin**. The negative command is **do not let the sun go down on your anger**. The motivation or reason is because

it **gives the devil an opportunity**. First, the positive. **Be angry and do not sin**. The Greek word is *orgizo* is used of God's anger and so this shows that **anger** is not intrinsically evil. We can be angry and not sin. However, anger can become sinful. Let's look at the two ways anger becomes sinful and then the one way we can be angry and not sin.



Everyone of us has one of these sinful tendencies. Everyone knows that **blowing up** is sinful but not everyone knows that **clamming up** is equally sinful. Both of these are emotional responses. Neither emotional response solves the problem since the emotional energy is released toward “others” or “self”.

First, many of us “blow up”. We turn our anger against the other person and attack them. This is the brute force tactic. The goal is to hurt them. The problem is that this doesn't solve the problem and it often backfired. We end up hurting ourselves because it results in loss of friendships, injury to our own body, irritability, sullenness, tenseness, and misery. These people are often sorry company. They have it in for others and they allow their problems to come between themselves and others. They don't understand the biblical doctrine of reconciliation.

The Bible clearly tells us that **blowing up** is sinful.

Proverbs 29:11 ¹¹ A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.

Proverbs 29:22 ²² An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.

Proverbs 14:29 ²⁹ A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly.

James 1:19-20 But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

Secondly, and equally sinful is the extreme of **clamming up**. These people turn the anger on themselves rather than others. The goal is to avoid confrontation. Rather than blowing up this turns into a slow burn.ⁱⁱⁱ People who clam up create a tension between themselves and others that results in bitterness and resentment. The key text on this response is right here in Eph 4:26.

“do not let the sun go down on your anger”.

In other words, don't clam up. The sun usually sets between 6 & 9 pm each day. If the anger sets in after sunset then it should be settled before the next sunset. The point Paul is making is that “it is essential to keep short accounts of anger, to settle the problem before another day begins.” (Hoehner, 622) Eadie says, “The day of anger should be the day of reconciliation.” (Eadie, 349). We are not to allow our anger to fester for more than one day. When we do it becomes sinful and we **give the devil an opportunity**.

Thirdly, the biblical response to anger. **Be angry and do not sin** is a quotation from Ps 4:4. The word for **sin** is *hamartano* and means “to miss the mark”. So, how can we be angry and not “miss the mark”? By not **clamming up** or **blowing up**, but instead, solving the problem. You must take the emotional energy and channel it through the word of God toward the problem rather than self or others. This way your energy is *constructively* used rather than *destructively* used. Of course, the problem comes in how we do this because to solve the problem always involves confrontation with another person while we are angry. Yet it is the way we confront them that makes all the difference. “They must be *confronted* to the extent that they are involved *responsibly* in the solution to the problem.” (Adams, 354) They are not confronted in order to embarrass them or hurt them but to help them, to be reconciled to them. The goal is to solve the problem.

To control your anger best you must become *solution-oriented* rather than *problem-oriented*. Problem-oriented Christians talk about the problem, feel sorry for themselves, start blame-shifting, and focus their energies on who is at fault. Solution-oriented Christians size up the problem, try to determine responsibilities, and then turn as quickly as possible toward fixing the problem. This may even involve rebuke but they are able to rebuke in love so that their tact has a loving purpose and is done in a loving manner. This is operating in the form which results in freedom and balance. It develops us when we work through confrontation in the biblical manner, focusing our energies on solving the problem rather than the problem maker. Don't clam up, don't blow up, but re-direct your emotional energy toward the problem and get it solved within one day so that any and all impediments between ourselves and others are washed away.

The reason we should not go more than one day without solving the problem is because it **gives opportunity to the devil**. The word for **opportunity** is the Greek word *topos* which means "place or position". This is where we get our English word "topography". Topography is the study of locating and mapping geographical formations or landmarks. Whenever we **clam up** or **blow up** we do not redirect our anger to solve the problem within one day and we give the devil a *topos*, "a place or position" to infiltrate our lives. Do you realize that when you let problems fester for more than one day you give the devil the opportunity to infiltrate your marriage? your children? or come between you and fellow members of the Church?

Q: When is an angry person not sinning?

A: When he is solving the problem within one day.

In conclusion, festering anger causes *hostility* which is contrary to *unity*, whereas reconciliation causes *growth* and *maturity* of the body of Christ.

Greek Text 4:28 o klepton meketi klepteto mallon de kopiato ergazomenos to agathon tais chersin ina eke metadidomai to chreian echonti

Translation 4:28 The stealer must no longer steal, but rather labor, working with his own hands that which is good, in order that he might have to share with the one who has a need.

C- The stealer must no longer steal,
C+ but rather labor, working with his own hands that which is good,
M in order that he might have to share with the one who has a need.

In v. 28 we have the “thief” or “stealer”. The negative command is **the stealer must no longer steal**. The positive command is that he should **labor, working with his own hands**. The motivation or reason he should **labor** is so that **he might be able to share with those who have a need**. Who is doing the **stealing** in Ephesians? Most likely it was laborers who stole things from their workplace or shopkeepers who cheated their customers. There was no welfare system in Paul’s day in Rome and so when a laborer was out of work he often resorted to stealing to support his family. The present tense and the imperative (*klepteto*) indicate that this was going on even among Christians. Paul is saying this stealing must stop. You are no longer an **old man**, therefore you are not to solve your problems the old way. You are a **new man** and you are to solve problems the new way. What is the new way?

The new way is to **labor, working with his own hands that which is good**. They are to begin to labor and to continue to labor in contrast to beginning to steal and continuing to steal. The word for **labor** is *kopiao* and means “to tire out or wear out in work”. The point is that **labor is exhausting while stealing requires little effort**. But since we are a new man all things are acquired with exhausting labor. You thought becoming a Christian was going to be easy? Becoming a Christian means that things have to be done the right way. If you don’t work you don’t eat. If you don’t eat you die. If you try to by-pass this by stealing then you’re a lazy bum and you put yourself under divine discipline and endanger yourself to the ‘sin unto death’. You’re a new man, don’t steal but labor. How?

By **working with his own hands that which is good**. The word for **working** (*egrazomai*) is the basic word for laboring in contrast to “idleness” or “busyness”. Some people are so busy doing nothing. Just wasting time. Paul is saying, don’t waste your time, do hard work that is constructive. **work that is good**. Beneficial to others and consistent with the **new man**. Why should we labor to exhaustion?

In order that he might have to share with the one who has a need. We are not to give everything we earn but we are to **give a share**. “One is neither

to hoard nor recklessly give all away.” (Hoehner, 627). Who are we to **share** with? Paul says **we are to share with the one who has need**. In the context the one’s who have a need are fellow Christians. We are to sense a real need and then to share a part of our material goods with the ones who have a need. It was common in the early church to share physical belongings in order to meet needs (Acts 2:45; 4:35; Rom 15:28; 1 Cor 16:1-4). “It does not mean that Christians are never to help the needy who may not be believers but their primary responsibility is to those who are of the household of faith. This will demonstrate a love for one another and the world will know that they are his disciples (John 13:35)”. (Hoehner, 627).

Q: When is a thief no longer a thief?

A: When he becomes a hard worker who shares.

In conclusion, God has created a ‘form’. Graciously, God has revealed this ‘form’ to us through negative commands and positive commands. God is not trying to limit us. God is trying to free us because freedom is found when we operate in the form. It is when we try to break free from the form as Michelangelo expressed that we enslave ourselves to the **old man**. We enslave ourselves to sin and this is not what God wants. Therefore, since we have laid aside the old man and the old lifestyle and have put on the new man at conversion we ought to live a new lifestyle. This new lifestyle replaces lying with truth telling because we are members of one another. This new lifestyle replaces the sinful extremes of clamming up or blowing up in anger with problem solving so that hostility is avoided and growth and maturity occur in the Church. And finally, this new lifestyle replaces stealing with becoming a hard worker who shares. Biblical change needs to take place in many of our lives. Biblical change requires removal of old practices, replacing them with new practices. Graciously God has given us a motive or reason why we should do each one and the indwelling Spirit to empower change.

If you are not a believer here tonight this lesson was not for you. It does not apply to you in the least. You don’t have a new man and so you can’t have a new lifestyle. You are the old man that we all once were. To lay aside the old man you must know that you are a sinner as described in Eph 2:1-3 and 4:17-19. You have a sinful nature and personal sins. You cannot please God by your good works because they all stem from who you are; a sinner by nature. But God loved us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He became

your substitute on the cross. Dying a death He did not have to die, but one He chose to die on your behalf. The sin issue has been answered on the cross in the person of Jesus Christ, the perfect God-man. But you cannot enjoy the benefits of salvation in Jesus Christ until you appropriate the truth by faith. What must you do to be saved? You must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Believing simply means trusting in the person of Jesus Christ for your eternal salvation. You can't do anything to merit salvation. Your good works don't get you one foot closer to God. It's Christ's work on the cross that you must trust in to get right with God.

ⁱ Schaeffer, Francis, *How Should We Then Live* (Westchester, IL: Good News Publisher, 1976), 70-71.

ⁱⁱ This phrase in Eph 4:25 is a quotation from LXX Zech 8:16.

ⁱⁱⁱ The human tendency is to blow up around those we know well or work closely with; spouse, children, extended family, and business partners whereas our tendency is to clam up around those we do not know well and we are trying to impress.

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