

Ephesians 4:15-24

Last time, we ended with verse 14. It is repeated here because it leads into verse 15.

14 We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming.

(This is what you are to do when you encounter false doctrine or deceitful scheming:)

15a But speaking the truth in love....

There are basically four options in what we speak:

1. no love/ no truth
2. love/no truth
3. truth/no love
4. love and truth

**1. Can you give an example of what each of these four would sound like?

One of the things that must be considered in this matter is a person's spirit and motive. This is particularly the case is gauging whether what is being said is truly loving.

We should not use truth to "bludgeon" someone into conformity, but to promote unity and lead to maturity.

This statement has its roots in Leviticus 19:17-18

*Do not hate your brother in your heart. **Rebuke your neighbor frankly** so you will not share in his guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but **love your neighbor as yourself**. I am the LORD.*

15b we must grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

We are to grow up...which results in the body being built up. And as the body is built up – and functioning properly – we will grow. This shows how the life of the individual Christian and the Church are greatly intertwined.

The best "environment" for growth is when we are connected to Christ – individually and corporately. This is what the Apostle Paul said in Colossians 2:19...*holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God.*

This verse also reminds us that for the body (that is the body of Christ, the church) to function well, each part must be "working properly".

And all of that is centered in love.

1 Corinthians 8:1b tells us that *knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.*

17 Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds.

Here the term Gentiles (ethnos) is not referring to believing Gentiles, but the nations/peoples apart from Christ. In other words, don't live like a non-Christian, but "live a life worthy of the calling" you have received.

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(4:1) Paul then goes on in three verses to list 8 characteristics of the one outside of Christ.
futility = mataiotes – perverseness; “devoid of truth and appropriateness” (Thayer’s Lexicon)

**2. What would “futility of the mind” look like in today’s world?

When we studied James, we saw how our minds – our imaginations – can lead to sin.

James 1:14-15

...each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart.

It’s good to be afraid of the dark! To see clearly, one needs light!

Alienated or separated... that is what we all were apart from Christ. But we were reconciled to God, and He wants us to help reconcile others. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21....

*So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who **reconciled** us to Himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰ So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*

The second negative characteristic is **ignorance** (without knowledge).

Peter also talked about ignorance as being the problem of the unbeliever (1 Peter 1:13-14)

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

**3. How is this kind of ignorance demonstrated today?

hardness of heart (metaphorical blindness, stupidity or callousness – dulled spiritual perception)

**4. Who in the Bible was spoken of as having a hardened heart?

Ezekiel 3:7

But the house of Israel is not willing to listen to you [Ezekiel] because they are not willing to listen to Me [God], for the whole house of Israel is hardened and obstinate.

Mark 3:1-5

Again [Jesus] entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. 2 They watched Him to see whether He would cure him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.

*3 And He said to the man who had the withered hand, “Come forward.” 4 Then He said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. 5 He looked around at them with anger; He was grieved at their **hardness of heart** and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.*

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**5. How can we keep from hardening our hearts?

One way is in Hebrews 3:13....

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

¹⁹ They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

lost all sensitivity – this is further evidence of the hardening of the heart. The New Living Translation says, “no sense of shame”

**6. In a spiritual or moral sense, how does one lose sensitivity?

licentiousness (or sensuality)

Here is an interesting juxtaposition: from no feeling at all to being driven by wrong feelings.

Paul describes this situation at length in Romans 1:21-32.

greedy – wanting more and more. (Like a person on illicit drugs who needs more and more to get the same “high”.)

²⁰ That is not the way you learned Christ!

Here is the conclusion. And like the passages we looked at earlier – Paul is always concerned about the purity of the Gospel.

That is why early in his letter to the Galatians (1:6-8) he wrote:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the One who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different Gospel—⁷ which is really no Gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the Gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a Gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

“Learning Christ” is more than acquiring knowledge about Jesus, but to come to have an true understanding that leads to a relationship.

**7. What are your early memories of “learning Christ”?

**8. How does one continue to “learn Christ”?

²¹ For surely you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as truth is in Jesus.

Truth – *aletheia* – completely true in every way.

Jesus was obviously very concerned with truth, and often begins statements with “Truly, truly” (or in the KJV, “Verily, verily”).

This dialogue from John 18:37-38 underscores the importance of truth.

“You are a king, then!” said Pilate.

Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me.”³⁸ “What is truth?” Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against Him.”

We have seen before the absolute statement of John 14:6....

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

**9. Some say this statement is narrow or "exclusivistic." How would you respond to that?

The above verses could also be summarized in what Paul wrote in Romans 13:12-14....

The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

*¹⁴ Rather, **clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ**, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

{ So let's get specific.... }

²² You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

"...put off your old self.... and clothe yourselves with the new self.. "

The picture in vss. 22 and 24 is to put off old, dirty clothing and put on clean, fresh clothing. Paul uses this picture in several places in his Epistles.

Remember 2 Corinthians 5:17

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

The believer has a new nature...it is a part of the gift of salvation. Just as Ephesians 2:8-9 leads to 2:10, our salvation is to lead to us being a new person whose behavior is different.

Renewed in the spirit of your mind

As we already saw, the mind is where sin begins. Often rationalization is a big part of that.

Romans 12:2

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world [in other words, put off the old self], but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — His good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**10. What do you think a "renewed mind" is like? How does this happen?

created according to the likeness of God...

Genesis 1:26a *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness...."*

There is much debate about what that likeness is, but certainly this is part of it: ***righteousness and holiness***.

**11. Where do we get righteousness? (If you're having trouble answering this question, read 2 Corinthians 5:21.)

**12. How do we become holy? Do you remember what is the meaning behind that word?

2 Corinthians 7:1

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

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1 Thessalonians 4:7

For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

We will encounter some additional pointers as to what a holy life is as we go on through Ephesians.

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