

Recall that Christians are united together in one body and are equipped for their own ministry and service to God by the shepherds, teachers and evangelists. In love, we speak the word and truth to one another, building each other up into maturity which is Christlikeness. Today, we will examine how Paul builds upon what it means to walk in a manner worthy of our calling while considering the implications it has to our conduct and community life with one another.

**Read Ephesians 4:17-5:2**

*Eph 4:17-19 - Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.*

**1. [30m] Paul urges his readers to stop walking as the Gentiles do. What characteristics does this lifestyle exemplify?**

- Unbelieving life, without truth, there is no hope of salvation. They are non-Jews.
- Life is in darkness, full of despair
  - Oblivious to this fact
- Do what is right in their own eyes; selfishness, pleasing their senses. Defiant lifestyle.

**a. What is the futility of the minds mean (cf. Ex 20:4-6, 1 Pet 1:18)? What does it mean that they are darkened in their understanding and alienated from God (cf. Eph 2:1-3)?**

- Star Trek Borg “resistance is futile”— there is nothing you can do, your efforts will be wasted/vain

Exodus 20:4-6 - “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. (ESV)

1 Peter 1:18 - ...knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, (ESV)

- The Israelites were warned about worshipping false idols yet they turned to them
- The Israelites clinged to the hopelessness of idols; their way of life was futile
  - Idolatry resulted in mental, spiritual and moral decadence in the society, the prevalent way of people’s living was futile
  - Warned against worshipping creation instead of the creator, looking for satisfaction to things that can’t satisfy
  - Futility is a characteristic of their minds and life as there is no understanding of God and his degree
    - God is the aim, the target
    - When we turn away, we wander lost and without purpose
- Darkened or blinded, indicates an obscured view, lost-ness, separation from God (who is the light)

Ephesians 2:1-3 - And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (ESV)

- We were dead because of sin (spiritually), without hope, without God
  - Blinded because of sin, can’t see the truth, can’t live in light of it and are separated from God
- We were separated from God because of our sin (alienated) under the power of the prince of the air (Satan)
  - Carrying out the desires of the flesh wholeheartedly following the prince of the air

**b. What is this hardness of the heart that leads to ignorance (cf. Rom 1:18-20)? What does it mean that they are callous (cf. 1 Tim 4:2) and have been given up to every kind of sensuality and impurity (cf. Rom 1:21-28)?**

Romans 1:18-19 - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (ESV)

- The hardness of the heart is the willful suppression of the truth which is plain to us, we are liable to God for our choices. We will not be excused.
- Actively and passively opposed to God

1 Timothy 4:2 - ...through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, (ESV)

- Callous
  - Hardness, no feeling, lack of sensitivity, not receptive, desensitized
  - Guitar analogy
    - We develop callouses that initially hurt when playing, over time the pain fades as we build up a hardness as we continue to play music
  - Sin analogy (comparison to guitar)
    - As we sin, our consciences are seared, as we willingly continue to sin, our consciences become more and more desensitized to sin.
    - Our conscience no longer restrains as we progressively sin more and more

Romans 1:21-28 - For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

- Unbelievers love sin and evil so much that God gives us exactly what we want. He gives them over to it, lust, sex, all impurity totally consumes us and they get the punishment for these desires.

*Eph 4:20-24 - But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

## **2. [20m] But you, in contrast, have been taught Christ, the truth that is in him. What does this mean (cf. 1 John 5:20)?**

1 John 5:20-21 - And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. (ESV)

- The truth that we have been taught in Jesus transforms us
  - The truth of God and of his purpose has come to dominate our minds,
  - Christ is the truth; eternal life and forgiveness are in him
  - Our lives are no longer dark, and our mindset is no longer futile
    - If you have been enlightened with the truth, why would you go back to your old ways of sin?
  - We are no longer alienated but walking step by step in the full light of the Lord knowing the price paid

### **a. The truth taught in Jesus is that you must put off your old self and be renewed in the spirit of your minds (cf. Col 3:1-2, 5-10; Rom 12:2)? Explain.**

Colossians 3:1-2, 5-10 - If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. [5]Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and

obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and [10] have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

- How are we to put off the old self for those that have learned Christ (v5-9)?
  - What you have learned and believe will naturally show up in your way of life
  - Comes by drastic measures, put the old nature to death and keep it far away! Violent and severe imagery
    - The command is serious, we cannot tolerate any sinfulness in our life. There is no “little” sin.
- How do we become renewed in the spirit in our minds (v1-2, 10)?
  - The indwelling of the Holy Spirit enables us to be heavenly minded, seeking things of eternal value
    - Keep our eyes fixed on the race and the goal; an eternity in heaven
  - Renewed by our knowledge of Christ
    - Old self: constant state of corruption -> death
    - New self: constant state of renewal ->life

Romans 12:2 - Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (ESV)

- Renewed in the mind by the knowledge of Christ which leads to maturity

**b. The truth taught in Jesus is that you must put on your new self, that which is God’s creation (cf. 2 Cor 5:17, Eph 2:10; 1 Pet 2:9-10)? Explain.**

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (ESV)

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (ESV)

- The old has gone, the new is come
  - Remember that we now must fulfilled what we were designed for
- As a result of our salvation, our lives will reflect this reality by the works that we do
  - Eph 4:24 – we are created after the likeness of God, in true righteousness and holiness
    - Righteous and holy by the work of Christ, and being made more righteous and holy daily

1 Peter 2:9-10 - But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (ESV)

- The conduct of the Christian will be evident to others
- Contrast the kingdom of darkness against the kingdom of light
- Q: when you became a Christian, how did you change? We should see evidences of God’s image in our life (righteousness and holiness)

*Eph 4:25-29 - Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.*

**3.[20m] Within the church community, why do you think it is important to be truthful with one another? From the verses above, how can we practically build one another up in the truth of Christ? What is one area you need to work on?**

Break into small groups for a practical reflection session.

- Why is it important to be truthful with one another? Truth is the overarching theme of this portion of the text.
  - We are called to speak the truth because God hates evil and lies (Zech 8:16)
  - Truth builds one another up, while lies will tear down and corrupt and destroy relationships
  - God uses community and others to refine us by speaking the truth although it might hurt us

- Truth is to build one another up towards maturity
- Practical ways to build one another up in the truth of Christ:
  - Correcting a sinning brother/sister by calling them out in their sin instead of tolerating it or turning a blind eye?
  - **Be angry and do not sin (Matt 5:21-26)**
    - Are we patient with one another? Slow to anger? Giving others the benefit of the doubt?
    - Anger is an impediment to worshipping God, we are called to be reconciled to others before worship
      - Anger is equated to murder (anger typically entails a desire to retaliate and do damage)
      - Is there anyone here that you need to be reconciled to? Are you guilty of not making amends?
  - **Opportunity to the devil (1 Pet 5:8-9)**
    - Unchecked anger gives room for the devil who is on the lookout for an opportunity to cause us to stumble
      - Anger causes bitterness and hatred in our attitude and minds which is why Paul tells us we need to set it aside by the end of the day
  - **Let the thief no longer sin (1 Cor 6:10-11; 2 Thess 3:10-12)**
    - Be honest in our work ethic. Do we slack off or steal time from our employers by browsing Facebook?
  - **Corrupting talk vs what builds up (cf. Col 3:16; Col 4:6; Phil 4:8)**
    - Are we careful in the manner that we talk seeking the other person's welfare above our own? Do we talk behind others backs? Words build up and can tear down. Are we honest with one another?

*Eph 4:30 - And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

#### **4. [10m] What do you think it means to grieve the Holy Spirit (cf. Isa 63:9-10)?**

Isaiah 63:9-10 -In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them. (ESV)

- We grieve the Holy Spirit when we unintentionally or intentionally sin (against God, neighbors or our own body)
  - Speak lies, are angry and sin, steal or engage in corrupting talk
  - When we do what we shouldn't be doing; it is not who we are as the new creation
- Impassibility of God
  - God's overall purposes are unchanged in his sovereignty
  - In the situation in time, he reacts to our sin

Recall that the Spirit of God that indwells us is holy. The Spirit's presence is the seal and assurance of the life and inheritance that Christians will possess fully in the end. This contemplation leads us to purify our lives (cf. 1 John 3:2-3).

*Eph 4:31-5:2 - Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

#### **5. You found out that Andy, a Christian friend you considered to be a close brother/sister has been talking behind your back, stating untruthful and critical things about you. You are very upset at this betrayal and you confront him/her... how do you approach this situation in light of the study and in particular Eph 4:31-5:2? What would you say?**

- Forgiving one another, be reconciled to each other
- Examining yourself, maybe there is some truth to what Andy is saying
- Explain why this type of behaviour is damaging to each other and the corporate body
- For their own good, they need to stop gossiping, we are called to build one another up in truth
- The trust may be gone from the relationship and need to be built back up

We have been called to put off our old life that was characterized by ignorance, futility and deceit. In its place, we must put on the new nature which means a new way of life characterized by holiness and righteousness. Reflecting on the outpouring of God's grace in our lives and by, we must purify our thought life at all costs. There must be the complete abandonment of the old way of living, and the working out of the new way of living, which will be evident in the conduct and the way we fellowship as a body of believers.