

New Man, New Actions

How and Why You are to “Put off the Old Man”

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil.

²⁸ 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.

²⁹ 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.

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

³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

(Eph 4:25-32)

Black and White

I SAY “**BLACK AND WHITE**” and you say? If you lived in the 1960s you might say **color** (as in tv), as it was around '65-'66 that shows like *Gilligan's Island*, *I Dream of Jeannie*, and *The Andy Griffith Show* all switched from black and white to

color. That was about the last time anyone can remember a world of regular black and white. Now, everything before it in movies or pictures just seems ancient. (How happy I am as a *Star Trek* fan that the show came out the first year that nearly all shows were being filmed in color TV.)

But black and white isn't just a way of talking about pictures. It is a way of talking about moral binaries like **right and wrong** or good and evil. Some people know this too, but they hate it. It is clever indeed that the original sign God gave to Noah, a rainbow, wherein he promised he would never again destroy mankind from the face of the earth with a flood, even though every intention of our heart is only evil all the time, was coopted and subverted several decades back by the homosexual movement as an “in your face” to God's covenant promise. Sexuality is seen as a fluid **spectrum of colors**, they think, though it is interesting that heterosexuality has no color in the rainbow of the LGBTQ...RSTU-VWXYZ.¹ Black and white has no place in a rainbow of sexual freedom.

¹ The *BBC* wrote a piece explaining to us that it is no longer LGBTQ but LGBTQIAAP and I've seen another “P” added to that! In other words, it is ...RSTUVWXYZ. But still, everyone (if you can dream it up you will one day be included) but the one God made is to be included. There are no breaks to this.

There is another way of thinking about this opposite. That is **the way of grey**. Curiously, grey is identical theologically to the rainbow, if you think about it right. *Fifty Shades of Grey* is an “**abysmally-written**” but “**phenomenally successful**”² trashy romance novel turned “R” movie phenomenon from the early 2010s that I have neither read nor seen and have no plans to. But when it became all the rage, one couldn’t help but know its basic premise. Reading a review of it you learn that the not coincidental protagonist named “**Christian Grey**” (subversion if there even was such a thing) seduces a young woman named Ana which quickly turns into her entering into an extremely sexually disturbed, violent, and abusive relationship.

But this is not the 1950, or even the 2000s for that matter. This is full-fledged postmodernism, and the point is not to vilify such behavior, but to normalize it. It is agenda driven propaganda out for the minds and souls of our youngest people. The point is, morality is on a scale of light to dark grey. By this definition, even if you are disturbed by some of the darker shades of the behavior, that’s ultimately your problem. There is no black and white, right or wrong.

² **Martin Saunders**, “Fifty Shades of Grey: The Christian Today Review,” *Christian Today* (Feb 13, 2015), <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/fifty-shades-of-grey-the-christian-today-review/48096.htm>.

It is total freedom. From God. Such is the way of the Gentiles.

Ephesians 4:25-32

Today we are looking at **Eph 4:25-32**. It is the second half of a larger unit that we began last time.

- A. 17-19. “**God**” “**every**”
- B. 20-21. “**heard**” “**truth**”
- C. 22. “**put off**” “**old man**”
- C¹. 23-24 “**put on**” “**new man**”
- B¹. 25-29. “**truth**” “**those who hear**”
- A¹. 30-32. “**God**” “**all**”³

It is also informed by the larger structure of the book and the need to walking in light of Christ’s love for us:

- (A-F) ... (Eph 1:1-3:13)
- (G) Eph 3:14–21: The Love of Christ That Surpasses Knowledge
- (H) Eph 4:1–16: To Walk toward the Unity of All in Love
- (G’) Eph 4:17–32: Walk in the Truth of Christ’s Love⁴
- (A’-F’) ... (Eph 5:1-6:24)

³ John Paul Heil, *Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 187-88.

⁴ Ibid., v-vii.

Therefore, in what follows, you must consider first the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge as you consider what it means to walk in the truth of his love for you.

The passage unfolds as **a series of commands**. Before looking at them individually, I thought it might be helpful to see that this is **not a hodge-podge** of random thoughts. **First**, they are all intimately related to **maintaining the unity** of the church through the Spirit that began at the beginning of this chapter.⁵ Thus, they are primarily corporate in nature.

Second, these commands teach you about righteousness in the body of Christ. To be more specific, they teach you about **righteousness in the NT temple of God**, which is the body of Christ. Some have seen it as a fulfillment of Ezekiel 43:11, “**Make known to them the design of the temple, its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, that is, its whole design; and make known to them as well all its statutes and its whole design and all its laws, and write it down in their sight, so that they may observe all its laws and all its statutes and carry them out**” (**Ezek 43:11**). Whereas Ezekiel did this in his own typological shadowy way before Christ, Paul is

⁵ **Gordon Fee**, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 713.

doing it throughout Ephesians (and other letters) on the other side of the cross. First, he told us about the nature of the NT temple, that it is made up of living stones being built up in union together with Christ as the cornerstone (ch. 2). Now, he is making known its statutes and laws.⁶

Third, they are all put as a series of contrasts, binaries, either/ors. Hence, the opening about sexual sins. Now, while those sins are certainly mentioned by Paul in the longer list (*as we will see next time, see Eph 5:3; cf. 4:19*), I used them here because it is a relevant way to introduce what he is doing. There are no fifty shades of grey, no rainbow of fruit flavors here. You have falsehood vs. truth (4:25); corrupting vs. edifying talk (4:29); sacrificial love vs. sexual immorality (5:2-3); crude talk vs. thanksgiving (5:4); darkness vs. light (5:8); unwise vs. wise (5:15); foolishness vs. understanding God's will (5:17); and drunkenness vs. fullness of the Spirit (5:18).⁷

⁶ See Ira Jolivet (spring boarding off Fee), "The Ethical Instructions in Ephesians as the Unwritten Statutes and Ordinances of God's New Temple in Ezekiel," *Restoration Quarterly* 48 [2006]: 193-201; Aaron Sherwood, "The Restoration of Humanity: Temple Cosmology, Worship and Israel-Nations Unification in Biblical, Second Temple and Pauline Traditions." Dissertation at the University of Durham (2010), especially 219, n. 97. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/85979.pdf>. In that note includes Gombis (Dissertation).

⁷ For thoughts on this list see Andrew Mark Stirling, "Transformation and Growth: The Davidic Temple Builder in Ephesians," A Dissertation at the University of St. Andrews (2012), 161, n. 39. Also R. Alan Culpepper, "Ethical Dualism and Church Discipline Ephesians 4:25-5:20," *Review & Expositor* 76:4 (1979): 531-32.

Fourth, these contrasts show you **two roads**. Jesus talked about one narrow road leading to life and one broad road leading to destruction (**Matt 7:13-14**). These roads are two ways of walking introduced back in that great **transition verse** of the letter. “I therefore ... urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (**Eph 4:1**). **Walking** is a theme we will look in much more detail at next time (as it is repeated several times in the following discussion: **5:2, 8, 15**, even as it has been in **vs. 1 and 17**). How you walk becomes the answer to the question we did not talk much about last time. **How do you put off the old man and put on the new man?** (**4:22-24**). What does that even mean? It is this idea of walking in a worthy manner that becomes the way we “**put off the old man**” and “**put on the new man**” (**4:22, 24**). **It involves getting rid of certain evil practices and replacing them with godly virtues.**⁸ Do you want to know how to put on the new man? Walk with Christ.

Understand that this outward practice is **not legalism**. **“Changed behavior will flow out of your new identity in**

⁸ **Clinton E. Arnold**, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 299.

Christ.”⁹ Calvin gets at it when he says, “from the righteousness of the new man, all godly exhortations flow, like streams from a spring.” And yet, this outward behavior is something tied to the heart in such a way that when you begin to practice virtues in Christ, even when it is difficult and perhaps part of you doesn’t even want to, that the outward behavior actually strengthens the resolve of the inward man. They feed off each other. This is because though we are body and soul, the two are united into one person. You must not divorce the outward behavior from the inward attitude in either direction, as if the outward behavior doesn’t actually matter or the inward motivation is irrelevant.

Fifth, these contrasts are explained as having two origins. Someone writes,

Ephesians depicts the worthy ... by contrasting it starkly with the blackness of the outside world. Prior to and outside of a Christian existence is the realm of sin, wrath, lust, and death; it is a godless realm controlled by malevolent forces. A worthy life requires “putting off the old [man]” (4:22), and “living no longer as the gentiles do” (4:17) ... There is ... a spiritual dimension to this advice: anger must not be allowed to

⁹ Ibid.

give “an opportunity to the devil” (4:27), and evil speech must not “vex the Holy Spirit” (4:30).¹⁰

It is this **supernatural dimension** (the devil vs. the Holy Spirit) that really gets at the heart of Christ’s work for his church throughout this letter. “**The sins that divide and thereby destroy the unity of the body come directly from Satan; to continue in any of them is to grieve the Spirit, who both has ‘sealed [you] and is the one responsible for the behavior that maintains [you] unity.’**”¹¹

Sixth, I see the list as made up of three basic categories: *sins of speech*, sins rooted in *the Ten Commandments*, and a kind of *summarizing list* (see chart next page).

The sins of speech **compliment the word-gift offices** of **4:11**. The sins from the Ten Commandments show the **universal and timeless nature** of the commands. The summary explains **the inward nature** of our sins and **how they move outward into behavior**. That reminds me of the heart of the Ten and “coveting” (mentioned in **5:3, 5**) the only inward sin of the formal Ten. They also summarize what he means

¹⁰ **Jeremy F. Hultin**, *The Ethics of Obscene Speech in Early Christianity and its Environment*. Nov-TSup 128 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 173-74.

¹¹ **Fee**, *ibid.*

Vices and Virtues: The Commands of Ephesians 4:25-5:21

Text	Vice	Virtue	Reason
4:25	Falsehood	Truth	We are members of one another
4:26-27	Anger	Do not let the sun go down on your anger (Forgiveness)	Give no opportunity for the Devil
4:28	Thief Stealing	Labor in honest work with own hands	Have something to share with anyone in need.
4:29	Corrupting talk	Talk that builds others up, as fits the occasion?	Give grace to those who hear
4:30	Grieving the Holy Spirit		You were sealed for the day of redemption
4:31	Bitterness Wrath Anger Clamor Slander Malice	Kind Tenderhearted Forgiving one another	As God in Christ forgave you
End of first sub-list			
5:1		Imitate God	You are his children
5:2		Walk in love	Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God
5:3, 5	Sexual immorality Impurity Covetousness (see idolater, vs. 5)	Not be "named"	As is proper among saints
5:4	Filthiness Foolish talk Crude joking	Thanksgiving	No inheritance in the kingdom of Christ
5:6-7	Deceiving with empty words		Because of this the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience
5:7-8	Do not become partners with them	Walk as children of light	At one time you were in darkness, now you are in the light
5:9-10		Discern what is pleasing to the Lord.	The fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true
5:11-12	Take no part in unfruitful works of darkness	Expose them	It is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret
5:13-14		MAXIM/PROVERB Anything exposed by the light becomes visible Anything that becomes visible is light.	PROOF TEXT Therefore it says, Awake, O Sleeper..."
5:15-16	Now as unwise but as wise	Look carefully how you walk	Making the best use of the time, the days are evil
5:17	Do not be foolish	Understand what the will of the Lord is	
5:18	Do not get drunk with wine	Be filled with the Spirit	Drunkenness is debauchery
5:19-21		Addressing each other in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs	Singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart Giving thanks always for everything to God... Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ
	SPEECH		ONE OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

that the Gentiles are “greedy to practice every kind of impurity” (4:19), for the focus in them is putting away “all” misdeeds to be transformed into the perfect image of the perfect Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Each of these commands hits directly at that singularly important intent, a truth that we have seen actually becomes a living witness to the wicked powers, that Jesus has begun a new creation, and they are living on borrowed time. He has defeated the powers and is enthroned above them in heavenly places. How we act therefore sends a message to them and the world that Jesus is victorious. We are his people. This is his kingdom. His temple is something totally other than anything they want or imagine.

For the Gentiles (4:17) there is no new man and therefore they have no contrast. There is only darkness of one shade of grey or another. All their shades lead to Destruction. But for us, there are only two, not fifty, not infinity.¹² They are the way of darkness or the way of light, the way of Satan or the way of Christ, the way of the old man or the

¹² This is not meant to imply that there are no “grey areas” in Christian ethics. But those grey areas only occur within the context of black and white, right and wrong. The grey areas are what we would call “disputable matters,” things where one conscience feels trapped, even though God has said it is OK, things where someone doesn’t know what to do, yet God hasn’t spoken to it. In the Fifty Shades of Grey world, there is no black and white. Everything is grey. In the Rainbow world of the LGBTQ, there is no place for right and wrong, only spectrums that refuse to admit to boundaries.

way of the new man. And for the rest of the letter, Paul will explain to you what it means. May what follows bring clarity to the moral confusion, and reason to the insanity in a world and church(!) that has moved so quickly from 50 shades of grey to 50 biological genders which must necessarily increase to fill an infinite variety of colors in the rainbow of plurality that denies all sense of right and wrong.

Speech Commands

Falsehood vs. Truth

First, we'll look at the [speech commands](#). This is because the list begins with one. [Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another” \(Eph 4:24-25\)](#). You can tell that speaking the truth [deals with the tongue](#). So, what it is compared with (“falsehood”) must also be. Listen to the parallel in Colossians, for it says almost the exact same thing. [“Do not lie \[pseudomai\] to one another, seeing that you have put off the old \[man\] with its practices and have put on the new \[man\], which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” \(Col 3:9-10\)](#). [“Falsehood” \(pseudos\)](#), a

word from which we derive all kinds of terms that begin with *pseudo* (pseudonym, pseudonymous, pseudo-science) had a special relationship to **lying**. Hence, the parallel. As such, it may be related to the **ninth commandment** about bearing false witness.

It is curious that Paul chooses the **very same sin to begin both lists**. In both cases, you have “put off” falsehood as the first way of “putting off” the old man. Why? This man is not false, he is true. Put off the old man and put on the new. He is not a false person. You must not act as if you are.

Augustine notes the ancient book of Wisdom, “‘**The mouth that lies destroys the soul**’ (**Wis 1:11**). **Therefore, the apostle puts truth telling in the first place.**” (**Augustine, On Lying**). **Wolfgang Musculus** thought that Paul was not talking about making a false statement but was speaking “**to the bad habit of telling lies, which our flesh struggles with because of the vanity of our mind and to which it is to some extent inclined. We see that most clearly in people who tell lies even when there is no need to, no reason to and nothing to be gained from it, and no shame or damage would be done to them if they simply told the truth.**” (*Commentary on Ephesians*). We are all inclined to it, because we all sin. You must not be this way!

It is important, I think, to mention that this is a **quotation from the OT**. In fact, many of these are. This one comes from Zechariah. **“Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace” (Zech 8:16)**. Zechariah **“is concerned with the conduct of Israel in the future when God will restore their fortunes.”**¹³ God restores her fortunes in a NT temple!¹⁴

It is interesting to note that **lying** was one of the sins **Ananias and Sapphira** committed that caused God to kill them (**Acts 5:1ff**). They did this in the context of the church and **stealing** money from this NT temple! What happens in a marriage when one spouse continually lies, or in a business partnership when one partner is constantly withholding truth? They fall apart. The same with the Church. Because we have been created as a new man, to lie to each other is to strike at this new man’s heart with a dagger. It is an intolerable sin because of how destructive it is. Lying is antithetical to Christ’s Kingdom. It has no place in it.

¹³ **Frank S. Thielman**, “Ephesians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 825.

¹⁴ In this regard, Stirling notes that it is highly probable that Paul has Zechariah (6:12-15) in mind in Eph 2 and his discussion of the temple. He believes this is partially confirmed in the quotation of Zechariah 8:16 in Eph 4:25. The reason is because, as we will see in a moment, **“we are members of one another.”** This is temple language. See **Stirling**, 81-92.

Clinton Arnold adds, “Honesty with one another is essential for mutual trust and is foundational to life in the community of believers.”¹⁵ This is the corporateness of the sin, and to be honest, it is the corporateness that is most in view, not only here but with the entire list. Evangelicals can be so introspective with sin that it seems to me we often miss the way these sins work themselves out in the church. Maybe that’s one of the reasons why we like to think of those inward sins, we don’t have to worry about how we behave around others if it’s only the sins in my own heart. That gets to what I said earlier about [taking the outward behavior seriously](#).

The cure is given in the same verse. “Let each one speak the truth with his neighbor” (Eph 4:25). Calvin defines “truth” as “straightforwardness.” That is, not monkeying around with the meaning of “is” or telling people that you smoked pot but didn’t inhale.¹⁶

¹⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 299.

¹⁶ In a recent interview with softball throwing ladies on *The View*, a former vice-president was asked about his scandal with inappropriateness with other women. The question was asked, “Are you sorry for what you did?” Three different times they returned to the question. His response is the definition not being straightforward. It is a breath-taking thing to behold:

“Look, here’s the deal. I have to be, and everybody has to be much more aware of the private space of men and women. It’s not just women, but primarily women. And uh, and I am much more cognizant of that. But I am ... so, like for example, I, I actually thought in my head when I walked out here, I mean, do I, we’re friends. Do I hug? No, but, but I have to be aware of it.

There is also a reason given, and this reason relates to the temple. “For we are members one of another” (Eph 4:25). This is the language of the body, the temple made up of living stones that he talked about in ch. 2. How we behave can profane the temple of God. There are things truly inappropriate for the temple but others that exemplify what it should look like. This list gets at both ideas.

Jerome has some good words about the reason. “To be members one of another points to a great mystery. He is

So I have to, I have to be more cognizant, and we all have to be more ... a woman or a man has a right to say, particularly a woman to say, “No this is not my space,” and [others?] shouldn’t have to say no. I should be able to read better. But I, never in my life have done anything in approaching a woman that has been, other than trying to bring solace, I’m used to, like one of your staff was, producers, I’m not sure who it was back stage saying, “I remember last time you were the only guy last time who got up and walked into the audience and talked to people. I’m used to, I think its really important we listen. I think those elected officials importantly listen and understand what people are going through and what their concerned about and let them know that you know. And so, I don’t think that that’s old fashioned, I think its everybody, we should be doing that. But I have to be more careful that I walk in, even including whether I sit down next to somebody and it’s not even invited to be, to sit down. So. That’s my responsibility. I have to be more, more aware, and its totally legitimate for someone not to have to say, “No, no. Don’t get in my private space.” It’s my job. It’s my read the “no no.” This is space that no one wants me to invade. But I, but anyway, I think it’s legitimate and I think it is uh, and to, and to, and to anyone... but I don’t think anyone’s ever said that I invaded their space in a way that was designed to do something, uh, other than making them feel uncomfortable, but not anything having to do with harassment or anything else. [But are you sorry?] ... Well, look, I I’m really sorry if they, what I did in talking to them in trying to consul that in fact they took it a different way. It’s my responsibility to make sure that I bend over backwards to try to understand how not to do that. [But do you want to say you are sorry?] ... I’m sorry I invaded your space and I’m sorry this happened, but I’m not sorry in the sense that I think that I did anything that was intentionally designed to do anything wrong or be inappropriate. It was inappropriate that I didn’t understand, that I took, I assumed. Look, I was. Anyway.”

Joe Biden on *The View* (April 26, 2019), https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2019/04/26/joe_biden_on_apologizing_to_women_im_not_sorry_in_the_sense_that_i_did_anything_intentionally_wrong.html

speaking of those who are very close to us in faith. For people are not generally ‘members one of another.’ But the faithful indeed are members of the faithful. Christians are members of the body of Christ. We are members with the saints who embody purity of heart and consummate goodness ... Hence we are being instructed to speak intimately of the truth of this mystery with the neighbor—to speak of the fullness of God’s truth” (Jerome, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 2.4.25).

Corrupting Talk vs. Talk that Builds Up

This is far from the only speech command even in our shortened list. The next one is found in vs. 29. “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths.” The word for “corrupting talk” (*logos sapos*) is found only here and in Mt 7:17–18; 12:33; 13:48; and Lk 6:43. In these latter texts it equals rotten fruit, decaying food, putrid fish. As Sam Storms says, “Paul is speaking about *spiritual halitosis!*”¹⁷

What does he have in mind? In some ways, it may be related to the **Third Commandment**, which makes it overlap with that list. I quoted this verse when I preached the Third

¹⁷ Sam Storms, *Biblical Studies: Ephesians* (Edmond, OK: Sam Storms, 2016), Eph 4:29.

Commandment years ago. There I also included other NT passages such as speaking out “arrogant words of vanity that entice fleshly desires” (Col 4:6), “irreverent babble” (1Ti 6:20), and “worldly and empty chatter” (2Ti 2:16), among others. In this same way, Ambrosiaster long ago said, “Many vices are implied in speaking ill of another, whether this means talking basely or disparaging the good of another or telling deceitful tales or lies” (Ambrosiaster, *Epistle to the Ephesians*). Didache, written perhaps as early as Ephesians itself says, “Your speech shall not be false, nor empty” (Did 2:5). False speech comes from false men. You must not be false in word or heart.

Perhaps something like **filthy language** comes first to mind with this command. Some of the Reformers clearly thought about this.¹⁸ But it clearly isn’t *just* that. Storms gives an even deeper list. “Lying (cf. v. 25), obscenity, abusive language, gossip, flattery that manipulates, cynical remarks, judgmentalism, slander, contemptuous talk, condescending speech (with a patronizing attitude), sarcasm that cuts and degrades, mockery, ridicule.”¹⁹ You need to think long and hard about the implications of speaking ill about

¹⁸ “Whoever delights in listening to filthy talk or who puts up with it without saying anything gives us evidence enough that his own heart is dirty and unclean.” **Musculus**.

¹⁹ **Storms**, Eph 4:29.

others. We need to consider, especially in the church, how our words, even when done out of some kind of zeal for a good thing, often hurt others inappropriately because of how we say them. With the rise of internet groups and how despicably Christians talk to fellow Christians, we need to consider how easy it is to dehumanize others thereby making this sin all the easier.

Again, he gives **the corrective**. He says, “**But only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear**” (**Eph 4:29**). “Building up” is again, **temple language**! Notice how the reason and the positive command both relate to how we talk to one another as Christians. Thus, the kind of speech you are to be known for are things like “**encouragement, truth, words that build confidence in others, words that remind others of their identity in Christ, praise, reassurance (esp. following failure), comfort, sympathy, instruction, rebuke for sin, loving criticism, warning of impending danger, etc.**”²⁰

Here’s **a tip** I learned long ago. You can take it or leave it, as it isn’t God’s word. But I’ve found it helpful. If you have something negative to say to someone, remember that they are human beings and image bearers, and if Christians,

²⁰ Ibid.

they are also forgiven and saved. People respond best to not being scolded or chided or yelled at, but to being truthfully encouraged. Start by saying something helpful, then say what you have to say, then say something else that will build them up. A friend of mine called it [the Oreo Cookie](#), though I'm not sure why. But it teaches a good lesson. Think not just about how upset you are and how they are wrong and need to understand it, but how they are your brother or sister in Christ and need also to be built up, not as flattery or schmoozing, but so that they you can remember obey the command.

Clamor, Slander, Malice

It is curious to me that Paul completes our passage today with [three more speech commands](#). He talks about “[clamor](#)” and “[slander](#)” and [malice](#)” ([Eph 4:31](#)). Clamor can be translated as “[shouting](#).” He is talking about angry yelling. I once lived below a couple that yelled for hours at each other into the wee hours of the night. Several times, someone called the police. You can bet they are not still together. Control your tempers. “Slander” is literally “[blasphemy](#)” (*blasphemia*). It may refer to abusing and vilifying other people

(Storms), but it could also include how you speak about God. “Malice” would seem to be related to the other two as **a kind of speech-act** that seeks to harm or distress someone else with words. Words really can hurt. In fact, because they wound the soul and the mind and the inside of a man, those wounds can last much longer than those caused by sticks and stones.

Scripture, of course, has a lot to say about the tongue. James says, “**The tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!**” (**James 3:5**). Is there any wonder that Paul would start and finish with such a small thing to us keep unity? It is perhaps the greatest destroyer of mankind in the history of planet earth.

Ten Commandments: Eternal Truths

Anger

Let’s turn now to consider these as part of the Ten Commandments (our second grouping). We have already seen two potential candidates coming from the Ten Commandments. **Falsehood** and truth are closely aligned with not

bearing false witness against your neighbor. **Corrupting talk** may be related to not taking the Lord's Name in vain. These are hardly the only ones in this list.

Another is the second in the list: **anger**. This one lurks behind **the Sixth Commandment**: You shall not murder. Jesus makes this explicit in his Sermon on the Mount. “**You have heard that it was said to hose of old, ‘You shall not murder ... But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment’**” (**Matt 5:21**). Jesus is telling you why someone murders another. They get angry. Murder is one of anger's end results. And since it is, it too, was forbidden in the command.

And yet, this command doesn't say “**Do not be angry,**” but rather “**be angry and do not sin.**”²¹ The point is, it is possible to be angry and not sin. Jesus got quite angry at those turning his Father's house (temple) into a den of robbers. But, as Paul prescribes here, he **didn't let the sun go down on his anger**. That's where the sin creeps in. He dealt with

²¹ Scholars show that there are multiple ways of translating this phrase. Some of them (“Do not be angry and do not sin”) can lead you to think that anger itself may be sinful. But these kinds of options simply do not work with the grammar. See **Daniel B. Wallace**, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 491-92; **Wallace**, “ὀργίζεσθε in Ephesians 4:26 : Command or Condition?,” *Criswell Theological Review* 3.2 (1989): 353-372; **Shikai Ronnie Poon**, “The Use of Psalm 4:4 in Ephesians 4:26.” *Academia.edu* (2009). https://www.academia.edu/4370735/The_Use_of_Psalm_4_4_in_Ephesians_4_26.

it, as Deuteronomy says, “**Before the sun sets**” (Dt 24:15). I’m not saying the way you deal with your anger is by going to a temple and throwing over money-changers tables (although, maybe, depending on the consequences you want). But you do have to deal with your anger and do so properly.

One of the greatest ways you can deal with your anger is by **forgiving** someone. This is actually mentioned in our last verse today. Forgiving them here means doing it before the sun goes down. Do it quickly. Make it right before you go to bed. Even if they won’t respond positively, you can still forgive them in your own heart. No one in our family is allowed to go to sleep angry. Anger doesn’t go away in the morning. Rather, it goes underground. Anger festers like puss in wound or like lava in a volcano and it is responsible many explosions and poisons that harm people.

The greatest person you are harming in not dealing with your anger is **yourself**. Quite often, the person you are angry with doesn’t even know it, because you haven’t told them. You’ve kept it hidden in your heart as something to use at just the right time when you strike out at them. But it comes out, whether you like it or not. And people can see it, even if they don’t exactly know what’s up. So you deal with it, as

we will see at the end, you must do so with Godly virtues like tenderheartedness, and kindness.

Sometimes, you don't know how to forgive someone. If that is the case, then you need to talk to others, including especially the person you are angry with. Jesus was very clear about this. "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt 5:23-24). Notice, Jesus places his context in the temple! The temple must not be a place where anger is allowed to fester.

You say, "But I don't want to do that. That's too hard!" Yes, it is. But that's precisely the nature of putting on the new man. It goes against the old man. It isn't easy. But you have Christ! You are not doing this by yourself or in yourself. The end is peace in the body, including peace in your own soul.

Jesus places very serious conditions upon not dealing with your anger. "Everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment ... to the council ... to the hell of fire ... to the judge ... to prison" (Matt 5:22, 25). These are both temporal and eternal punishments. Your anger can get

you thrown in jail because you end up acting on it in bad ways. If you do not take this seriously, thinking God doesn't care about it because you are a Christian, then you haven't begun to understand what it means that Christ is living in you, and you are in perilous danger. How can you say that knowing the Spirit of God who dwells within you?

The **eternal consequence** is interesting in light of **Paul's reason** for obeying this command. It is supernatural. “**Give no opportunity to the devil**” (**Eph 4:27**). This kind of refusal to deal with your anger comes from Satan himself. It is not a Christlike attitude. It comes from Satan. Luther said, “His rage we can endure.” Peter said, “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1Pe 5:8). He is full of anger and hate for you. And Satan uses it to create all manner of other vices in you and in others you are angry with. Take the supernatural talk in this letter seriously. Paul certainly does.

Stealing

For that matter, he is also called “the father of lies” (John 8:44). And Jesus says of him, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10). Curiously, the third in the list is stealing. “Let the thief no longer steal” (Eph 4:28). Amazingly then, the first three things in this list are all ascribed to Satan elsewhere in the Scripture. Do not give opportunity to the devil by being just like him!

Curiously, stealing was the second major sin of Ananias and Sapphira! And we’ve seen that it relates to the NT temple. Clearly, this is coming from the Eighth Commandment, “You shall not steal” (Ex 20:15).

Its positive tells you a little about why someone might be stealing. “But rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands” (Eph 4:28). The biblical ethic places responsibility squarely upon the individual Christian, not on the state, not on corporations, but on individuals. It is no more ethical for the state or the church to steal in the name of helping others than it is for the individual to steal in the name of helping himself.

The reason given is “so that he may have something to share with anyone in need” It is to come freely from a person (“share”), not out of compulsion or threat of violence if you do not comply. When you make money, the command is to

share it with whoever in the body is in need. This is one of the main reasons why we work and why the church collects offerings. But again, those are to come from your heart and not merely from a brute command. Jesus has changed you. You are in him. So come to learn to love and do what he loves.

Eternal Truths

Why talk about these in terms of the Ten Commandments? It is because it helps you to see that these commandments are 1. **Not new** and 2. **Not gone**. Paul isn't making these commands up. He gets them straight out of the Decalogue, the requirements of which are written even on Gentile's hearts (**Rom 2:14-15**), and the heart of which is written on your heart of flesh so that you want to do them.

These commands are holy, righteous, and good. They reflect the eternal nature of a just and righteous God. That's why they are not gone. God does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He always hates lying to others, soiled speech, anger that rages on, and thieves who refuse to work. He especially hates it among his own people. Knowing the origin of these commands should help you see

their lasting, universal nature. Knowing that Christ is in you helping you want to obey them should help you see the unsurpassed beauty of the NT temple. What other place on earth is like Christ's precious church?

I want to make one last point here. The command, “**Be angry and do not sin**” is the second is our list and also the second that is taken directly from the OT. This time it comes from the Psalms. “**Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah**” (Ps 4:4). And there are other verses in our list that also come from the OT:

OT Quotations/Allusions in Ephesians 4:25-32 ²²	
Ephesians	OT Citation
Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (4:25)	Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace. (Zech 8:16)
Be angry and do not sin ... (4:26)	Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah (Ps 4:4) ²³
Do not let the sun go down on your anger, (IDEA IS do not delay)	“... before the sun sets” (Dt 24:15)
“Let the thief no longer steal” (4:28)	“Do not steal” (Ex 20:15; Lev 19:11)
Do not grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30)	“They rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit” (Isa 63:10)

²² See especially the helpful paper by Shikai Ronnie Poon, “The Use of Psalm 4:4 in Ephesians 4:26,” *Academia.edu* (2009). https://www.academia.edu/4370735/The_Use_of_Psalm_4_4_in_Ephesians_4_26; Frank S. Thielman, “Ephesians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 825-26.

²³ On whether Paul is quoting something like the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs see Garrett G. Thompson, “Jewish Scripture, Tradition, and Eschatology in the Ethics of Ephesians 4.25-32,” *Academia.edu* (2016), https://www.academia.edu/28606214/Ethics_of_Eph_4.25-32.pdf.

Also Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:31 and Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 in Ephesians 6:2-3.²⁴ I'm certain there are more allusions than these.

Pointing out the fact that he is quoting many places in the OT (Moses, Psalms, Prophets) reinforces the point I just made about the lasting nature of the moral commandments. These are not just for Israel. They are for the new Israel; they are the laws of the new temple. This is illustrated by **the placement of the Ten Commandments** into the Ark of the Covenant (**Ex 25:16, 21; Dt 10:2; Heb 9:4**), which went inside the **Most Holy Place** of the temple, under the very throne seat of the Divine Warrior. This signifies that they are the heart and soul of the temple. In this light, the commands given here illustrate “**the pattern of transformation from behavior characteristic of the Old Humanity ... transformed into New Humanity ... as ‘the household of God.’**”²⁵ That “household” is the NT temple.

As the Ten were brought near to the Most Holy Place, so you also have been “**brought near by the blood of Christ**” (**Eph 2:13**), past the **dividing wall** of hostility (**14**), turned

²⁴ This is in **Andrew Mark Stirling**, “Transformation and Growth: The Davidic Temple Builder in Ephesians,” A Dissertation at the University of St. Andrews (2012), 20, n. 58.

²⁵ **Gombis**, Dissertation, 142-43.

into one **new man**, *not through* the law of commandments expressed in ordinances (15), but through the Gospel of Jesus Christ your head who has given us peace (14, 15) and made us to be **a living temple** (21) where **God himself dwells in us** (22) and commands reside on hearts of flesh. What you say and how you act makes all the difference in the temple of God. You are to remember all the time that your sins profane his holy place, thereby grieving the Spirit of God who sealed you for the day of redemption.

Summarizing Commandments

Finally, we have a kind of **summary list**. It begins with another OT idea. “**Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.**” This comes from **Isaiah 63:10** which speaks of Israel in the wilderness after God had established them as his people and placed himself in their midst in **the tabernacle**. “**But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit.**” In saying this, Paul is connecting the NT church to the OT church. But it is an eschatological link. Unlike them who were lifted and carried (9), he gives the reason, “**by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption**” (**Eph 4:30**).

They were not sealed in the same way you are. Their temple was external. You *are* the temple of God. The Holy Spirit dwelt in their temple. He dwells *in you*. It is this indwelling that becomes the “**sealing**,” a word we saw in **Eph 1:13**. This is God’s guarantee that he will bring you to glory, for he himself dwells within you and he can no more separate his Spirit from you as he can from Christ, for Christ and you are in vital union through faith. You are one. This becomes the motivation for not grieving the Spirit.²⁶ The Spirit is the opposite side of the supernatural that we saw with the devil. Which kingdom do you want to belong to?

This all comes to a **conclusion** with a list of **six sins** you are to avoid (**Eph 4:31**). They are grouped into two pairs of

²⁶ **Going Deeper:** It is a theological detour to look into what it means to “grieve the Holy Spirit.” Grief is an emotion, or more properly, a passion. Throughout church history, our fathers have spoken of God being “without passions.” This includes all the major Reformed Confessions and goes back almost as far into antiquity as you care to go. While everyone until recently affirmed this, they did not all do so the same way. I tend to side with the Cappadocian Fathers, those who sought to affirm the language through the incarnation of Christ while denying it of the divine nature. Christ was grieved because he became a man. Therefore, *God in Christ* grieved even though apart from the incarnation and theophanies, that is in pre-created history, God would have no ability to grieve. The same would be true of the Holy Spirit. It is because the Spirit is in us (or among us) that we can speak of the Person of the Spirit grieving. There is an interesting logical question with this passage that can’t be avoided in this regard. It goes like this.

1. We are not to grieve the Holy Spirit (**Eph 4:30**).
 2. We are not to sin in our anger (**4:26**).
 3. Therefore, we are to be imitators of God (**5:1**).
 4. Therefore, we must be able to speak in some real sense of “God” (*Theos*) both grieving and being angry while not sinning. (see Wallace, “Command or Condition,” 362)
- I believe that solution is found only when the Persons interact with their creation, and not in the brute divine essence itself. In that sense, he is impassible.

three. The first three are **bitterness**, **wrath**, and **anger**. These are deep roots that grow on the inside of person when not dealt with as we discussed a moment ago. The thing to see is that they are **internal**. You can't make a state law against them. How could you possibly prove it? ("hate crimes" try but fail miserably for just this reason). But God knows.

He also knows that they **spread from the inside out**. It isn't what goes into a man that makes him unclean, but what comes out of him. In this instance, we return to the tongue. All "**Clamor and slander ... and all malice**" (**Eph 4:31**) must be "**put away from you**." Not just some, but all. They are to be put away, the parallel to putting off. You may have them in your arsenal. Do not use them. Put them down.

In return, we have **three virtues** that replace them. "**Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another**" (**Eph 4:32**). Think of how these **three virtues** would change your tongue when you are speaking lies, slandering, rebuking. Think of how they would change your hands when you think of stealing. Think of how they would change your heart when you get angry.

They are the **definition of love**. Love is what you are to put on and in this way you will put on Christ, the new man,

and all the world will know that you are Christians. **The reason** is the greatest motivation you would ever have and the perfect way to end a sermon. “**As God in Christ forgave you.**” It is truly unfathomable when you know your own miserable condition that you would ever seek to not forgive someone else after the grace that has been shown to you. If you do not understand, then you do not understand the grace God has shown you. You need to be woken up from your dark slumber, see your ugly black heart, and repent.

But if you do understand, then you will know why the grace of God is the greatest motivation in all the world to do what Christ commands. You will not want to play games with shades of grey or colors of the rainbow so that you can get away with whatever you feel like. You have understood that there are only two kingdoms. The kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of Christ.

See the beauty of obeying him because of his grace for you in Christ and his gift of the Holy Spirit. See the beauty, stop sinning, and put on the new man you were created to be.

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