

THE LIFE OF THE CONVERTED

Ephesians 4:25-32

Introduction:

So, how does a mature church act? How does a spiritually mature person behave? Over the past few weeks we have been looking at the practical side of our Christian life.

Ephesians – divides naturally into two parts. Chapters 1-3 deal with our position in Christ – what Christ has done for us. Chapters 4-6 deal with our practice here in this world – how we ought to live in light of what Christ has done for us.

Ephesians 4 begins with a plea to live our lives in a manner that is worthy of the calling of God on our lives. The foundation of our walk with the Lord is the unity that God has created within the body of Christ coupled with the expectation that we will do everything possible to maintain that unity with humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance.

Paul then goes on to talk about God's plan and purpose for the church, and the gifts Christ has given the church to enable it to accomplish that purpose. He gave the church leaders—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers—for the purpose of equipping the people for service, which leads to the building up of the body, which ultimately leads to maturity, as a body and as individuals.

Paul then gives us a picture of what a mature church looks like. It is characterized by stability, so that we are not taken in by every new idea and false doctrine that comes along; security, so that we can speak and receive the truth in love, for instruction and correction; supportive, so that we work together to produce the kind of body that glorifies God.

Beginning in verse 17, he calls us to a new kind of lifestyle, beginning with a description of the heathen pagan way of life—the life of the Gentiles without God. But, he says, if you know Christ, you know better than that. You have learned what it means to be converted, changed, made new.

We looked at the conversion process that he describes in vv. 22-24. Three steps:

- Put off the old – get rid of all that belongs to the old life
- Be renewed in your mind – cleansed, changed in your thinking
- Put on the new life – a change in your lifestyle.

Today we are going on from that point. We have come to some specifics about that new lifestyle—the life of the converted person. There are four specific areas that Paul describes in vv. 25-29, followed by a summary of what the converted life is like in vv. 30-32

We are going to look at these areas briefly – we don't have time for a lot of detail. But one important thing to note is that each of these areas that Paul talks about involves this idea of replacement – putting off and putting on. It is not enough to get rid of the wrong habits – they must be replaced with that which is good.

Replacing Old Habits vv. 25-29

So what are some of these things? It would appear that some of these sinful behaviours were a problem in the society of Paul's day, and possibly even within the church in Ephesus. Certainly they are a problem in our society. But are they an issue in our lives? Well, we will see as we look at these verses

- 1) Lying – honesty v. 25
dishonesty of all kinds – we wouldn't do that...would we?
 - a) Hiding defects in an article we are selling
 - b) "Tell them we're not home"
 - c) Telling a story in such a way as to give the wrong impression (Illust. Captain who recorded in the log every few days, "The first mate was sober today."
 - d) Exaggerating in order to impress or influence someone
As Christians we are to put away all dishonesty and instead speak the truth.
- 2) Anger vv. 26-27
Clearly, there is an anger which is not sinful, but the important question is, how much of our anger could be classified that way.

→ [From Illy]... HOLY ANGER

Aristotle made this wise observation: "Anybody can become angry—that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not easy!"

When you read the gospel accounts you will find a number of places where Jesus displayed incredible anger. But it was always directed at the sinfulness of those around him and the disregard for holiness and righteousness – moneychangers and merchants in the temple; the Pharisees and their self-righteous outward behaviour, masking inward wickedness.

However, I don't know about you, but most of the anger that plaques me could certainly not be labelled as holy anger or righteous indignation. My anger, and much human anger is more about me not getting things my way, than it is about the holiness of God.

Do you realize that unholy anger actually allows the devil a foothold in your life? Look at v. 27 – When we allow anger to smolder in our hearts, we are opening ourselves up to the devil to have a place in our lives.

3) Stealing – giving v. 28

What is the opposite of stealing? It goes far beyond just leaving things alone. The opposite of stealing is giving.

There is so much stealing these days...but we wouldn't do that, would we?

→[From Illy]... THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

It seems that for a lot of people "polite theft" has become a simple matter of self-protection. By brooding on the idea that they deserve more out of life than they are getting, they pad expense accounts, insurance claims, and income tax deductions. They salve their consciences with the rumour that allowances for a few shrewd self-preserving rip-offs are built into the system. One study showed that a third of all hotel and motel guests steal during their stay. Other reports indicate that from 50 to 90 percent of business thefts are the result of employees who go home with more than their pay checks. They are a greater problem than dishonest customers or organized crime.

So, what does Paul instruct us to do? What is necessary to replace the habit of stealing? What we need to do instead is to work hard and give to others, in order to break the habit of taking what is not ours.

4) Unwholesome talk – edifying speech v. 29

- a) Gossip...
- b) Oaths...
- c) Swearing – Using God's name
- d) Off-color stories
- e) Criticism
- f) Sarcasm

Discuss as necessary – see Col. 4:6 – "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

A Picture of the Converted Life vv. 30-32

vv. 30-32 summarize the converted lifestyle – It is a Spirit-pleasing life. We are to get rid of: Bitterness, Rage, Anger, Brawling, Slander, Malice. We are to replace these things with: Kindness, tenderness – compassion, forgiveness.

And never forget that God has forgiven you. In Christ we are offered forgiveness by the one who has been the most offended. We are to, in turn, offer forgiveness to those who offend us.

Conclusion

So, how does a mature church act? How does a mature person behave? I remind you of Paul's words earlier in this chapter. *Read vv. 20-24* – There is the principle – put off the things of the old life, be renewed in your thinking, and put on a new way of life. Replace lying with truth; greed and stealing with hard work and giving; corrupt speech with words that edify and build up.

Most of all, put away the inner things—the bitterness, anger, malice and the like and replace it with kindness, compassion and forgiveness.

I think we could summarize this with one statement that comes from the lips of Jesus himself, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them..." (Matthew 7:12)

I believe that this passage gives us plenty to think about and work on in the days ahead.