

Ephesians 4:25—Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

Paul begins this verse with “*Therefore*” to connect his prior teachings to the subject matter of verses 25-32. He has previously taught that God makes every New Testament believer into a holy and blameless saint (Ephesians 1-3); that He has gifted the members of the body of Christ so the body might grow in unity and maturity (Ephesians 4:1-16); that every member of Christ’s body is no longer the old self, nor a combination of the old self and new self, but the new self only (Ephesians 4:17-24). Because of what God has done for the members of Christ’s body, they, by His grace, can live in a manner that begins to match who God made them into at the point of salvation/justification. Therefore, Paul addresses the saints’ behavior in Ephesians 4:25-32.

The words “*laying aside*” (Ephesians 4:25) are an aorist participle, meaning that Paul is actually communicating, “having laid aside once and for all.” Hence, “*falsehood*” (Ephesians 4:25), or as some versions render it, “*lying*,” has been laid aside as a lifestyle for the saint of God. Because the old self naturally committed sin, the old self (who we were before we met Jesus) lived a lifestyle of habitual “*falsehood*” (Ephesians 4:25). But our old self has been eradicated (Ephesians 4:22; Romans 6:6; 7:4; Colossians 3:9) and replaced with the new self (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; 2Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20), freeing us to live a lifestyle of righteousness and holiness. We sin at times, but sin is an unnatural act. In fact, for a child of God to continue a lifestyle of habitual sin is impossible (1John 3:6-8). Thus, when Paul writes, “*laying aside falsehood*,” which can be interpreted “*having put off once and for all falsehood*” (*Wuest Commentary*),¹ he is communicating that a lifestyle of falsehood (habitual falsehood) is no longer part of the believer’s experience.

“*Falsehood*” can go undetected if we fail to remain alert; for blatant lying and slightly exaggerating the truth are included in this same category. The believer is no longer bound to such behavior:

Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him (Colossians 3:9-10)

Instead of speaking falsehood, we are to “*speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another*” (Ephesians 4:25). Christ’s body, the church, functions most efficiently when each member communicates “*truth*” with its adjacent members according to God’s blueprint. As a matter of illustration, just imagine the resulting chaos should the brain generate a constant stream of lies (the brain being the computer that takes messages from our physical senses and transmits them to the mind). The eye could be focusing on a butterfly yet the mind think “*viper*” as a result of the brain’s miscommunication. This scenario would generate bedlam within the entire body! Consequently, only when believers “*speak truth*” to their “*neighbor*” (Ephesians 4:25—to fellow believers) does the body function according to design. Truth is properly communicated through allowing “*the Spirit of truth*” (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13) to teach each member of Christ’s body the Word of “*truth*” (John 17:17) which, in turn, reveals the Source of “*truth*,” Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Hence, the supernatural seeks environments where truth is exchanged among saints. Spiritual growth transpires, resulting in the corporate body epitomizing the truth through daily living. Lying stymies this growth and destroys the common life in the body (Romans 12:5; 1Corinthians 12:14-27).

To communicate publicly what has been entrusted to us in private conversation is betrayal. However, to purposely withhold information in an attempt to mislead or deceive is falsehood (lying). Also, to “*speak truth*” in the form of a loving rebuke (when needed) is healthy for everyone involved.

Ephesians 4:26—Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

Be angry, and yet do not sin; (4:26a)

“Angry” is from the Greek *orge*. The anger that Paul addresses here is evidently anger directed toward what opposes God. Jesus displayed such anger while cleansing the temple (John 2:13-17), yet remained sinless.

do not let the sun go down on your anger, (4:26b)

“Anger” in this case is *parorgismos* and differs from *orge* in Ephesians 4:26a. Debate exists as to the righteousness or unrighteousness of this response. One thing is certain. Once displayed it must be laid aside (“do not let the sun go down on your anger”—Ephesians 4:26).

Ephesians 4:27—and do not give the devil an opportunity.

When “anger” (Ephesians 4:26b) of this sort remains overnight, bitterness results—giving “*the devil an opportunity*” (Ephesians 4:27). We understand well that Satan needs no “*advantage*” (2Corinthians 2:10-11). When he tempts us to pay back evil for evil, passages such as Proverbs 20:22, 24:29, and Romans 12:17-21 must come to mind.

Ephesians 4:28—Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.

“Steal” is from the Greek *klepto*, from which we get “kleptomaniac.” Yes, a holy and blameless saint can be deceived into taking what is not rightfully his—but it does not make him a thief. A saint who has sinned, yes—never a thief! He will be chastened of God (Hebrews 12:5-10), unlike unbelievers who go their merry way indulging in a lifestyle of thievery (1Corinthians 6:9-12). Some of the saints at Ephesus were evidently stealing from others (Ephesians 4:28), behavior unacceptable before God. (We must take nothing that is not rightfully ours—even when filing our income tax, when we are undercharged for purchased items, when punching a time clock, etc.)

Believers are to give up stealing (a sin which many times indicates laziness and lack of initiative) and go to work. We must understand what it means to “*labor*” (Ephesians 4:28). (Read Proverbs 6:9, 13:4, 15:19, 20:4, 21:25, and 24:30-34 to discover the consequences reaped by those lacking initiative.) Paul taught that if you don’t work you don’t eat (2Thessalonians 3:10), for such lackluster behavior results from a lack of discipline (2Thessalonians 3:11). In fact, he considered those who failed to provide for their families as having “*denied the faith, and...worse than an unbeliever*” (1Timothy 5:8). Paul could teach in this manner because he lived what he taught (Acts 20:34).

Paul, in using the phrase, “*performing with his own hands*” (Ephesians 4:28), emphasizes the importance of working for our possessions. Individuals who are given everything normally fail to appreciate the benefit of labor, many times leading an undisciplined and fruitless existence. The believer is to labor in “*what is good*” (Ephesians 4:28). Consequently, employment that requires us to compromise God’s Word must be jettisoned if possible.

We are to “*labor*” for two reasons: (1) to provide for our families; (2) to have something “*to share with him who has need*” (Ephesians 4:28). We should, therefore, be “*cheerful*” givers (2Corinthians 9:7), knowing that “*it is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35). In fact, we need to follow the pattern

of those saints described in 2Corinthians 8:1-5. Only through yielding to Christ can a lifetime of stealing be exchanged for a lifestyle of sharing with those in need (Proverbs 29:7).

Ephesians 4:29—Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.

“*Unwholesome*” means “corrupt, depraved, vicious, foul, rotten, or impure.” Words that fit these categories are not to “*proceed from your mouth*” (Ephesians 4:29), for they are normally spoken to harm others. We are to refrain from gossip and all forms of evil speaking, for David writes:

Who is the man who desires life, and loves length of days that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. (Psalm 34:12-13)

What, then, is to come forth from the believer’s mouth? “*Only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment*” (Ephesians 4:29). “*Edification*” means “to build up, improve, or encourage.” Consequently, if what we say doesn’t build up, improve, or encourage, it should be left unsaid (1Thessalonians 5:11). The wise speak proper words at proper times, meaning that their words meet “*the need of the moment*” (Ephesians 4:29)—bringing delight and “*healing*” to the listener (Proverbs 12:18; 15:23; 25:11). Therefore, to “*associate with a gossip*” is unwise (Proverbs 20:19). Because the tongue can be “*a restless evil and full of deadly poison*” (James 3:6-8), Paul wrote:

But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. (Colossians 3:8)

Our words of edification can “*give grace to those who hear*” (Ephesians 4:29), but raw truth, spoken void of love and compassion, can destroy. Hence, Paul wrote:

Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person. (Colossians 4:6)

Salt preserves in that it extends the shelf life of certain foods. In the same way, our words can help retard the growth rate of the moral decay around us. They can also “*give grace to those who hear*” (Ephesians 4:29). Jesus’ words were “*gracious*” (Luke 4:22; Isaiah 50:4), so why should our words be anything less (Ephesians 4:29)?

¹ Wuest, Kenneth S. (1989). *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, MI. www.eerdmans.com. Used by permission.