

The Book of Ephesians – Part Ten

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Adapted from John Herbert's notes; Presented by Jeanne Alley

1). Ephesians 4:31

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. 5:1 ¶ Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

a). Ephesians Chapter 4 concludes with direction given as to what 'putting off our old man' and 'putting on the new' will look like. And as we noted in Part Nine, what we see here is relational. It has to do with how we are to relate to one another.

b). The admonition ends with the command for us to forgive one another, just as God in Christ forgave us. And we saw how in forgiving our sins Christ bore and still bears the scars that came from the crucifying of His flesh, and how, if we forgive one another according to His example, we will also have to crucify our flesh and possibly bear the scars of the pain our brother's sin has caused us...all the way to the Judgment Seat. It is an uncomfortable truth: forgiveness will always require a sacrifice on the part of the one doing the forgiving.

c). Again as we saw last time, to forgive and forget is not a scriptural concept. The reality is that we have to forgive even though we can't forget.

d). Chapter 5 then continues from the conclusion of Chapter 4 with the word, 'therefore' – bringing us right back to all that has just gone before drawing a comparison again between two ways of living.

Ephesians 4:17

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk...

f). Instead of walking as the rest of the Gentiles, we are to 'be imitators of God as dear children'. And 'imitators' seems to be a good translation of the Greek word used here, in that we are told to conduct ourselves in the image and likeness of God.

g). Now here is the thing that we need to remember – our spirit is fully and totally redeemed and therefore is apart from our sin nature. It is our redeemed spirit which is also called our new man. And according to scripture, our new man is in the likeness of his Creator –

Colossians 3:9

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

h). At the point of our initial salvation, our spirit is fully redeemed. The Holy Spirit has breathed life into that which had no life and the light has shone in the darkness of our hearts as we are born from above –

John 3:6

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

i). As amazing as this event is, our newly 'born' spirit is not automatically in the ascendancy over our old man, the man of the flesh. But the good news is that through our new birth our spirit is now capable of gaining that ascendancy.

j). Then according to our scripture from Colossians Chapter 3, our new man is renewed, or restored, or made strong 'in knowledge' – epignosis – 'according to [following after] the image of Him who created him'.

k). Remember that we have seen in Chapter 4 with regards to ourselves and the process we are presently in –

Eph 4:15

but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ –

l). The metaphor that is used here to describe this process is 'growing up' –we would call it spiritual maturity – and we are 'growing up in all things'.

2). The process towards our spiritual maturity has two interrelated facets. The first has to do with our coming into an understanding of God's plans and purposes with regards to Man, i.e. going from the milk to the meat to the strong meat of the word as the mysteries of the Kingdom are opened to us. This is a first and necessary step, so that we can like Rebecca and Ruth make the determination to make the journey towards our inheritance –

Genesis 24:58

Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go."

a). And during the course of our journey there are many opportunities for us to turn back as Orpah did – which is why there are so many occasions in the scriptures that we are told to keep a firm grasp on that which we have received concerning God's plans and purposes and His faithfulness in delivering them –

Hebrews 2:1

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

b). Once we have the determination to continue on until the end, keeping fresh in our hearts and minds all that God has made possible for us, then the second facet of our spiritual maturity comes into effect – that of faithful obedience –

Hebrews 4:11

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

c). Great as it is to know all we can possibly know about the coming Kingdom, our knowledge of the Kingdom alone is not enough for us to find entrance in. We now have to take the commands of Christ, set out for us in the pages of scripture, and apply them to our day to day experience. We have to be doers of the word and not hearers only. This is exactly what we have been looking at in our past weeks of study here in Ephesians. And so with the offer of the Kingdom in view, this is now what we have to do.

d). Another uncomfortable truth is that it is entirely our own responsibility to choose how we will act and what we will say. Both our actions and our speech are determined by our faithfulness to the word of God, or not; they are not controlled by our present circumstances or our past.

e). As we looked last week at the admonition in our opening scripture, “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.”

f). And here’s another truth concerning this: These characteristics of our old man must come to the forefront of our emotions before we can choose to put them away from us.

g). In other words, we will have to *be* angry before we can *choose* to be angry *and not sin*. We will have to have the words on the tip of our tongue to speak evil of our brother before we can choose not to.

h). All of our list, the bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, malice will inevitably be characteristics of the flesh that we will experience. Having the emotion, or even the desire to act in any of these is not of itself sin *until we actually put it into practice*. When confronted with the choice, we can then choose instead to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. And a good part of our coming to maturity is recognizing when a choice has to be made –

James 1:19

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

Proverbs 14:29

He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly.

i). Again we can all appreciate how this may be the most difficult thing we have to do, but as we said last time, difficulty does not absolve us from responsibility. And most times this will inevitably require a considerable struggle on our part that may go on for a long time. Choosing to act in faithful obedience is not an anesthetic – we will have to patiently endure the pain of crucifying the flesh.

j). This has to be this way in order that the genuineness of our faith can be proven.

k). Let's remember what we find in Peter in relation to the saving of the soul-

1Peter 1:6

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

l). Sometimes our various trials may come through circumstances beyond our control – such as keeping our heart and mind in line with scripture during sickness or the present financial crisis – but we must also allow for the fact that these trials also come through our relationships, especially from within the body. It is at these times when we choose to relate to each other according to the scriptures rather than according to our old man, in order that the genuineness of our faith is proven.

m). If we are truly serious about our pursuit of the Kingdom, we will fight tooth and nail against our old man in order that we may be faithful to the word, trusting in God rather than our own understanding. Giving up our own ability to control a situation and relinquishing that control to God can be a very scary thing. After all, can we really trust Him? –

Proverbs 3:5

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 ¶ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. 8 It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.

n). And do you see what our 1 Peter scripture says? Our faith is much more precious than gold that perishes, and is going to be tested by fire – and the only place this will happen is at the Judgment Seat. And if our faith is then proven to be genuine, it will constitute the works that remain, that will receive a reward; the fire will reveal the scars of worthiness from the crucifying of our flesh – and will in that Day 'be found to praise, honor and glory' – which we will receive from the Lord.

o). No doubt this is why we find the following recorded in James –

James 1:2

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.....12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

p). And just in case our theology is a little shaky, this is how verse 13 continues –

James 1:13

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

q). And here we have it in a nutshell – the wickedness in our own heart is entirely our own. We can resist it and crucify our flesh on a consistent basis and thereby receive ‘the crown of life’. Or we can give in to it and let our old man dictate our actions on a consistent basis, resulting in death for the age to come.

r). And if we bring our ‘being tempted’ over into the area of bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking and malice, we will realize that they all come out of our own desire. We *want* to do it and our desire to act in this way is enticing, it is seductive – but it will draw us away from the truth if we give in to it.

s). How blessed we are to have the grace to make the right choice.

3). And with all this in view it is no wonder that Ephesians Chapter 5 continues as it does - 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

a). The ‘sweet-smelling aroma’ attributed to Christ’s sacrifice would be a reference to the burnt offering that was given for sin within the Mosaic economy. The appropriateness and the worthiness of Christ’s sacrifice for our sin is described by using the sin offering as a metaphor for it.

b). Can we realize then that our sacrifice, the dying of our flesh in relation to sin would be received by God in the same way?

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Psalms 51:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart-These, O God, You will not despise.

4). And then continuing with the same theme, we pick right up in Ephesians -

Ephesians 5:3

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

a). According to our scripture it is fitting, it is right, it is proper for those who are the saints of God never to have sexual immorality of any type or greediness for money or greediness for the things money can buy, brought as an accusation against them. These are issues that the body of Christ should never have to deal with and should not be debated among us.

b). Then along with these three we are also to include 'filthiness, foolish talking and coarse jesting' - because these are not fitting, are not right, are not proper for those who are saints of God either. So let's be clear we know what we are talking about with these.

c). Filthiness = Greek - 'aischrotes' = from 150; shameful, i.e. obscenity:--filthiness.

d). Foolish talking = Greek - 'morologia' = silly talk, i.e. buffoonery:--foolish talking. [this word is derived from the word 'moros' from which we get our word moron. We will remember the foolish, 'moros' virgins]

e). Jestings = Greek - 'eutrapelia' = (meaning well-turned, i.e. ready at repartee, jocose); witticism, i.e. (in a vulgar sense) ribaldry:--jesting.

f). In other words, we are not to play the fool and we should not make fools of others through what we say about them, and particularly there are to be no jokes or comments with a sexual innuendo for the sake of getting a laugh.

g). All of these demean ourselves or the person we are talking about causing us to devalue the very one for whom Christ died.

h). Instead of speaking in this way we are rather to 'give thanks'.

i). Giving thanks = Greek - 'eucharistia' = from 2170; gratitude; actively, grateful language (to God, as an act of worship):--thankfulness, (giving of) thanks(-giving).

j). Here again is a good example of death and life being in the power of the tongue.

Colossians 3:8

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

5). And just so that we are clear as to why it is important for us not to act in this way, our Ephesians scripture spells it out for us –

Ephesians 5:5

For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

a). This is the same thing we see in –

1Corinthians 6:9

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

b). And again in –

Colossians 3:4

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. 5 ¶ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

c). And here in Colossians we have not only the Kingdom perspective, ‘when Christ who is our life appears’, but also our responsibility in putting off the old man – ‘therefore put to death your members which are on the earth’ – and the consequence for not doing so – ‘because of these things [fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and covetousness] the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience’.

d). And this is exactly what we see again as we continue in Ephesians-

Ephesians 5:6

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers [companions] with them.

e). Many Christians are readily deceived by empty words – words that will tell them that there are no negative consequences at the Judgment Seat, that the grace of God covers all, that in that Day we will stand before a loving and forgiving Savior, not a Judge. And as we have already seen it would be the desires of our own heart that would willingly let us be deceived in this way as we turn from the truth to self justification; choosing what is convenient and desirable for our present circumstances rather than looking to the prize; choosing the easy path of self gratification rather than the narrow gate of self sacrifice.

f). And the admonition here for us is clear – the wrath of God in its full measure will be meted out on those who choose disobedience – therefore we should not choose to be part of that company...and it is our choice.

g). In fact, the brother who continues unrepentant in a lifestyle of this kind of sin is to be shunned –

1Corinthinas 5:11

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person. 12 For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? 13 But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."

6). Again, at this point in Ephesians a contrast is made between what we were and what we are now in Christ –

Ephesians 5:8

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

a). The imagery here takes us right back to day 1 of the restoration in Genesis Chapter 1. We were darkness, before our initial salvation, but now because of that salvation we are now light. But just as in Genesis the light and the dark exist side by side, so it is with us. Therefore we must choose to walk as children of light and not children of darkness.

b). This same thought is presented this way in –

Romans 13:12

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

c). Here we see this present age described as ‘the night’, a time of darkness – but ‘the night is far spent and the Day, the age to come , is at hand’ and so, because of the Day’s imminent arrival we are to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. This is the same as putting off the old man and putting on the new, the same as not walking in the flesh but walking in the Spirit, the same as not being disobedient but choosing faithful obedience instead.

d). And if we choose that associated with the light – the new man, the Spirit, faithful obedience, then this is seen as putting on armor, an armor that is parallel to that we see in Ephesians Chapter 6 – the whole armor of God – armor that will protect us during our

pilgrim journey with a view to being found worthy at the Judgment Seat. Those who choose to put on this armor are those described by Peter-

1Peter 1:5

who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

e). We can also see in Romans how putting on the new man, putting on the armor of light and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ are all different ways of saying the same thing--and that doing so makes no provision for the flesh.

f). Now according to Ephesians 5:8-9, if we walk as children of light then we shall be fruitful. We shall produce the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit that can only come from walking in the spirit, which is found in all goodness, righteousness and truth – three characteristics to be found in the new man only. There is no goodness, righteousness or truth in our old man. And then verse 10 admonishes us to find out what is acceptable to the Lord. And isn't this exactly what we have been doing in our study of Ephesians?

g). Acceptable = Greek – 'euarestos' = fully agreeable:- -acceptable(-ted), wellpleasing.

h). In case we are still wondering what it takes to be well pleasing to the Lord, let us remember –

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

i). It is faith, faithful obedience, that is well pleasing to the Lord – and this would encompass all that we have been looking at in the last 10 weeks or so in our study of the Book of Ephesians. And remember the commendation that the Lord gives with respect to this in –

Matthew 25:23

"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and **faithful** servant; you have been **faithful** over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

7). And so with faithful obedience in view, our admonishment in Ephesians Chapter 5 continues –

Ephesians 5:11

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. 14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

a). That which we have already seen in verses 8-9 is reasserted here – works associated with darkness are unfruitful. There is nothing to be gained by them because darkness is the complete opposite to the One who gives light –

Ephesians 6:12

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

b). And as a consequence of this we are to have no fellowship with the works of darkness – rather than having fellowship with them we are to expose them for what they are – a death sentence.

c). Our scripture tells us that ‘it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret’ – what greater shame would it be for us in that Day if we have had fellowship with them.

d). The works of darkness though can only have power over us if they remain secret, if they remain hidden. If they are openly acknowledged and declared, then that power over us is no longer there.

e). This is not an open declaration before the congregation, but our audible confession before the Lord. We can either try to hide and cover ourselves with a fig leaf or own up to what we have done and take responsibility for it.

f). And again, this will require the crucifying of the flesh, picking up our cross and following Christ –

John 8:12

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

g). If we choose rather to walk in darkness, then we will have made a deliberate choice to be in ignorance of what awaits us at the Judgment Seat.

h). **John 12:35**

Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. 36 "While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."

i). Jesus here is addressing His disciples with regards to His physical presence with them. We have the One who testifies of Jesus, the Holy Spirit indwelling us, we have the living Word who is light – and it is that light which has shone in our hearts –

2Corinthians 4:6

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

j). There is *no reason* for us to be in darkness.

k). Romans 13:9

For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. 11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

l). 1Corinthians 15:33

Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." 34 Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

m). In conclusion, let us take encouragement from all that God has done for us, and let us rejoice that the word of light searches out the darkest corners of our heart, and let us give thanks that we are not in ignorance of the truth and have received a heavenly calling –

1Thessalonians 5:4

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 ¶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. 11 ¶ Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.