

## **“Ephesians - A New Walk” cont’d**

### **The Family of God**

Ephesians 4:17-30

Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.

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**Jeff:** Greetings. It’s good to be with you on this last leg of Ephesians chapter 4. Before I get started, let me just tell you that I think that my concussions symptoms will be prolonged. Don Maurer sent me a video of him playing the piano and singing about the virus. Immediately after that I started seeing not only double, but sometimes triple. And when I see quadruple, some of the things that I see, some of the persons that I see are Don himself. So I think that set me back a little bit. But I’ll get through it. And you pray for me, and we’ll struggle through it together. Well, let me read to you Ephesians chapter 4. And I’ll start reading at verse 17 and we’ll read through the end of the chapter together.

*“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 and greed, to practice every kind of impurity.*

*“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 the 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.*

*“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. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.”*

Well, that’s our text for today. And I simply want to start by reminding you of something that we started with in this chapter. We said that the book of Ephesians is divided up into two main sections—the indicatives (chapters 1-3)—this is what God has done for you in Christ. And the last three chapters—4, 5 and 6—these things are the imperatives. These are what you must do because of who you are in Christ.

And so we come to this chapter fully expecting to be told what to do, what not to do, and so on. And so this particular point is called *keeping up with the pace*.

I want to start with a brief story to illustrate what it is that I’m about to say. And really this story will serve to contextualize the rest of what I’ll say today.

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I had a friend. In fact, he was the best man in my wedding and I in his. He got married and decided that he was going to move out West. His parents had already made the move. And his father was a pretty avid hunter and my friend as well. And the father would say to the son, “Why don’t you come out here? We’ll get our funds together and we’ll start a hunting guiding business.”

So my friend finally went. There were some other issues that caused him to decide that. But he took his wife and they moved out West. And they were involved in a business out there that they were working on so that they could get money and eventually transition to doing hunting and guiding full time.

Well it just so happened that the father was not paying bills and things weren’t getting done. And eventually my friend stopped getting paid a paycheck. And he called me up and we talked about it and I said, “Boy, I think you need to talk to your dad and confront him about what’s happening if you haven’t already.” And he hadn’t.

And so he sat down and talked with his dad. And his dad told him over the course of time that he had a woman on the side, that he was having an affair, that the money he was making was going to her. And this obviously created what amounted to an atomic bomb in that family’s life, a major explosion.

But the point of this story is this. The son, my friend, came out against his father. He told him that what he was doing was wrong and called him to repent, and so on. The father became very angry with his son. And in vengeance what he started to do was this. He started to tell the bill collectors that it was not his business but his son’s business, and he merely worked for his son. You see, he and his father shared the same name. And so the bill collectors started to call him. And he couldn’t persuade them that it wasn’t his business.

He eventually went to a lawyer and asked the lawyer’s opinion. “What do I do in this situation?”

And the lawyer told him, “The only thing that you can do in this situation is to change your name and disappear from the scene. Get another job. Start a new business under a new name,” and so on. He said, “That’s the only way you’re going to be able to get out from under this.”

Now what was the lawyer’s counsel? Well, the lawyer’s counsel was simply this. You need to change your identity. Now the interesting thing is that when we come to this particular text, it’s interesting because there’s a parallel to that story.

Let’s say you were to sit down with the apostle Paul. And you were to say to him, “You know, I’m having all these troubles and struggles and trials, and I don’t know what’s wrong.”

And the apostle Paul would say something like this to you. “Look, you have a new identity. Your identity has been changed. Why is it that you’re living out of your old identity?”

Now think about that in relation to my friend. Let’s say that my friend had hired the lawyer. And the lawyer had changed his identity, had changed his name. He had gotten him a new Social Security number, and so on. Let’s say that all of these things happened. He gave them to my friend and my friend paid him for the job done. And then let’s say

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that my friend started handing out his old name and his old Social Security number. And he still had these problems. And then he went back to the lawyer and sat down with the lawyer and said, “What seems to be the problem? I’m having all these struggles and trials and tribulations.”

And the lawyer would then say to him, “You have a new identity. Why are you living out of the old identity? Of course you’re going to have trouble.”

That’s what we’re doing as Christians. We have this new identity in Christ. And yet we continue to live out of our old identity which is out of Adam.

And the question that comes to mind immediately when we think about this particular issue is how do we stop? It’s a very practical question. How do I stop living out of my old identity and how do I start living out of my new identity?

Well, the answer is not all that difficult. When you really think about it, it’s a principle that you find over and over again in the Scriptures. But it’s not just a principle that you find over and over again in the Scriptures. It’s a principle in life.

Now what is that principle? It’s the principle of *putting off and putting on*. I want you to think about that very simple principle in life.

When I was growing up my parents had a very small garden. And every year at the beginning of the season, before they would plant, we would go out and we, my brother and I, would be instructed to go out into the little plot of land and to weed all of the old plants and all of the weeds that had grown up. We were to put off or put out all of the weeds and all of the dead plants before they put on the new seed. And so it’s a very simple principle that we learn in life.

But think about this. If I were to look out into the audience, if we were back at the old homestead—the barn—and we were together, my guess is that I would look out into the crowd. And again my guess is that the only person that I would see wearing their pajamas under their street clothes would probably be Don Maurer. Now Don would probably be sitting there in his jammies which would be out over his street clothes. And we would all look at Don and it would be fine. We would all understand; we’d all give that knowing nod. But everyone else would have taken off their jammies and put them on their beds and then put on their street clothes. And so we all know the principle of putting off and putting on.

And this is exactly what we find in this text. It’s very clear, in fact. For instance, Paul says that we need to put off falsehood. And what do you need to put in its place? You need to put on truth telling. And so we are to do these things that Paul is calling us to do. And they’re very simple. And he gives us a number of them.

Put off anger and put on righteousness. And if you are angry, don’t be unrighteous in your anger. But don’t harbor that. You need to confess it so that you can be righteous, and so on.

Now the question has to be this. The question has to be how is this not moralism? I mean, think about it. How is it not moralism for me to tell you or for Paul to tell you to stop doing this and start doing this? And the answer to that is a very simple one. The answer to that is that we are only being asked to do what has already been done for us.

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I want to go back to that lawyer illustration. I want you to think about it for just a minute. Let’s say that the lawyer said to my friend, “Now look here. On the basis of that first interview, you’re a young man. And I realize that your resources are dried up. You moved from Pennsylvania out here to the West. And you expected your father to be a father. And you expected to go into this business together and you had another venture in mind. We understand all that. And so we have a benevolent fund here at the firm and we want to help you. So what we want to do is, we want to pay to get your identity changed. We’ll get you a new Social Security number and a new name. We’ll even get you a passport and all the other things that you’ll need to live an entirely new life. We’ll even set you up in a new business with a new name. We’ll give you a new house to live in so you won’t have your old address. We will entirely change your life. And it won’t cost you a thing; it will just be given to you freely.”

And that’s the gospel. I want you to think about that for just a minute. That’s what Jesus does for us. He gives us an entirely new identity. He takes us from the old and he sets us down in the new context. And we have a new identity and a new name, a new place to live, a Kingdom where we live. We have a place at the table of the King. We have an entirely different life. And all we have to do is live it. All we have to do is live it.

And here’s the great thing about it. When we’re out and about, and we happen to make the foolish mistake of giving our old Social Security number, or letting it slip that this is our old name, the wonderful thing about it is that there’s a thing called repentance. And we repent of our sin. We confess it before God. And God who is our Advocate in Christ Jesus, who is our Lawyer in Christ Jesus, what? Forgives us of our unrighteousness. It’s a wonderful thing. It’s a wonderful image to think about. And all we have to do then is live it.

That’s what makes this not a moralism. This isn’t a moralism. This is gracious; this is a gift. This is what God has done for you in Christ Jesus. Therefore live according to what He has done for you, what He has supplied. All of the resources are yours in Christ.

Now I want you to just think about that for a minute. The verse that Paul quotes is interesting. The verse that he quotes in this section about speaking the truth is in verse 25. That’s lifted out of Zechariah chapter 8, in verses 16-19.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Zechariah 8:16-19, NKJV.

*“These are the things you shall do:*

*Speak each man the truth to his neighbor;*

*Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace;*

*Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor;*

*And do not love a false oath.*

*‘For all of these things are things that I hate,’ says the LORD.*

*“Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying,*

*‘Thus says the LORD of hosts:*

*‘The fast of the fourth month,*

*The fast of the fifth,*

*The fast of the seventh,*

*And the fast of the tenth,*

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*Shall be joy and gladness and cheerful feasts  
For the house of Judah.  
Therefore love truth and peace.””*

**Jeff:** The interesting thing is that that particular section talks about people living in the context of the City of Truth. In other words, I want you to think about it. They’re made citizens; they live there. That’s where they live. That’s where they live, move and have their being, in the City of Truth. In other words, they are citizens that embody the principles and the virtues of the city in which they live. And so as they live in the City of Truth, they embody the truth of the city in which they live. In other words, you would point to them as citizens of that city and say, “I know where he lives.”

It’s sort of like the John Bunyan *Pilgrim’s Progress* book. Talkative is known to live in the City of Destruction on Prating Lane. You know, it’s known where he lives. Why? Because he’s characterized by it.

And that’s the same with the Christian. People will know where we live because we’ll be characterized by what characterizes a Christian.

But that’s not all; there’s something else that I think we need to derive from that. One of the things that we need to remember is that we live in that City of Truth together, which is why, when we put off and put on, we put off not just for ourselves. But when we put off lying, we don’t put off lying for us. I mean, there’s a sense in which we do. We’re not liars if we’re in Christ. We are truth as it is in Christ. But if I’m alone, then speaking is not a big deal. But if I’m with others, well then it’s a big deal.

And so I’m a person who puts off lying not just for my own sake, but for the sake of others. And I put on truth. In other words, I’m a truth teller not for my own sake only, but because of others I’m a truth teller.

And so the interesting thing is that we do these things because we’re together. And that’s the thrust of Paul’s final admonitions. We do these things because we live together. We don’t go to bed angry because we’re going to get up to someone else in the morning, and so on. That’s the idea.

And so the question that we’re left with in this particular section is, how is your walk? How is your walk before God in Christ? And that becomes an important question for all of us.

Well, that’s all I have for you under that particular point. And I know there’s a lot more there. For instance, we could talk a lot about depravity, and so on. And that’s why we need this new identity. But unfortunately we’re not together, and I’m just going to keep it to this time now. Maybe there will be a day when you can ask me questions about these things. But for now, the Lord bless you and keep you until we can meet again, which I hope will be very soon.