

Open the Eyes of My Heart (Part 19)

Ephesians 4:25-32

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Last time we learned from Ephesians 4:17-24 that those who have faith in Jesus, who know the truth of the gospel, see the light of Jesus and are drawn to His light and transformed by it. The light reveals sin, so those who don't know God flee from the light like spiders, but those who are drawn in by the light have trusted Jesus to take away their sin and are continually transformed, casting aside their old ways and putting on the likeness of Christ. Continuing in Ephesians, we will see that much of this transformed life has to do with our attitudes and relationships in the church body.

Paul begins in v. 25 by talking about how our speech should be affected by knowing Jesus. A big part of our relationships has to do with what we say to each other. As Jesus said, it's the words that come out of our mouths that defile us, because they reflect the heart. In particular, Paul says here that the hallmark of speech that comes from a transformed heart is truth. Those who know the truth speak truthfully and put off falsehood, which is the word *pseudos*, meaning something fake or a lie. Sometimes we use fake disingenuous speech to hide our true intentions and thoughts, or even worse to manipulate. But this is the speech of those still in darkness. In the body of Christ we must be transparent, honest, open, and vulnerable. This is why we have fellowships and small groups, which give us opportunities to open up and be real with each other. We should take down any facades and speak truthfully.

Paul moves on in vv. 26-27 to discuss another topic related to speech and our relationships in church, specifically how we react to others when we are angry. He acknowledges that sometimes we have a right to be angry, however we must not sin. We must not say harmful things to those who anger us, which we will later regret. However, we must not let our bottled-up anger fester either. Paul says not to let the sun go down on our anger. Instead of holding on to anger and becoming resentful, thereby giving our former father Satan a foothold, we must resolve our anger through forgiveness and reconciliation. This distinguishes us as children of God.

Next, Paul talks about other aspects of relationships in church. At first glance, it seems he's talking about stealing and unwholesome talk. However, in both of these topics he mentions providing for needs as the motivation. We see in v. 28 that people must not steal but instead

should work to be able to share with those in need. He's addressing those who out of laziness take advantage of the fact that much was shared in the early church. During this time, church members would donate to the church, which would redistribute aid to those in need, just like CCGC's Love Fund. But some decided they didn't have to work and effectively stole from the church, taking away what was meant for the truly needy. Paul urges such people to instead work so that they may not burden others but rather contribute to help those who have real physical needs.

In v. 29 Paul moves on to talk about providing for people's spiritual needs. The unwholesome talk he mentions here is a vague term, but is clarified when contrasted with talk that builds up others according to their needs. We must not tear people down with our words but build them up, exhorting and encouraging them in their spiritual walk. If we ever rebuke someone, it should be with the intent to build them up. We all have struggles in our spiritual lives, so rather than hiding our struggles and putting each other down, we must be transparent about these needs and encourage each other. Our speech must be edifying.

Then v. 30 tells us not to grieve the Holy Spirit. Whenever the body of Christ doesn't act like the body of Christ, the Spirit is saddened. The Spirit is a guarantee of Jesus' return and the redemption of our bodies. And though our transformation will be complete when He returns, the Spirit also continually transforms us now. So let us listen to Him and not return to our old ways.

Finally, we must get rid of all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander and malice (v. 31), which are signs of hatred and broken relationships. In church we will step on each other's toes occasionally. In a marriage there are ups and downs, but it's during hard times and arguments that it becomes even more necessary to remember the binding marriage vows. Likewise in church when there are disputes we must remember Jesus, who unites us. How we respond to conflict should reflect the character of Jesus, who is kind, tenderhearted, and merciful (v. 32). This message is easy to understand, but it must be met with humble reflection. Are you living a changed life? My high school friends and I are fairly open with each other and can speak without pretense, and they don't even know Christ. How much more then should we be open with each other and encourage each other, being bound by Him? Let us reflect on our own lives and strive to encourage each other to live a changed life.