

# The Book of Ephesians

## Chapter 4

### Ephesians 4:1–32

*"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, <sup>2</sup> with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. <sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. <sup>8</sup> Therefore He says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.' <sup>9</sup> (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) <sup>11</sup> And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; <sup>14</sup> that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, <sup>15</sup> but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—<sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. <sup>17</sup> This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, <sup>18</sup> having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; <sup>19</sup> who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. <sup>20</sup> But you have not so learned Christ, <sup>21</sup> if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: <sup>22</sup> that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, <sup>23</sup> and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, <sup>24</sup> and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. <sup>25</sup> Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. <sup>26</sup> "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, <sup>27</sup> nor give place to the devil. <sup>28</sup> Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. <sup>29</sup> Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. <sup>32</sup> And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

## **Ephesians 4:1–6**

*“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

### **Orthopraxy**

Having set the foundation of what God has done *for* the Ephesians, Paul lays out the plans for what He will build *through* them—and *through* us! Some would call this the work of the believer—but I suggest that this is *God’s* work—in us. *“For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:13). It is His power at work—in us, not our work in Him. *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10).

Understanding this truth is liberating. We are not striving to change or working to mature. God is the one developing us and building the character of Jesus in us—for His glory. *“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren”* (Romans 8:29). That said, believers still have the capability of disobedience. Therefore, the exhortation to proper living.

Orthodoxy is correct and proper doctrine. Orthopraxy is correct and proper practice. Paul did not call the believers to proper living until he had first laid the foundation of proper belief. Far too many religious people and religious systems begin by dealing with people from without—by behavior modification. However, a genuine relationship with God begins from within. Proper belief and genuine regeneration develops into proper behavior.

### **Walk Worthy?**

When Paul wrote, *“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called”* (vs. 1), he was introducing a change of theme and leading the Ephesians into some of the practical/applicational ways God was intending to develop them. This would be true for every believer.

*“To walk worthy of the calling”* might suggest that a believer who walks properly is *“worthy”* of what God has done for them. However, this is not the case! Paul’s intended purpose was to call the recipients of God’s grace to offer themselves in obedience to Him! He communicated a similar expression to the Romans when he wrote, *“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”* (Romans 12:1). It is simply the right thing to do.

The blessing, privilege, and wealth of every believer should motivate us to live *for* the Lord. I realize this seems contradictory when considering the fact that *“it is God who works in”* us. However, as mentioned above, believers still have the capability of disobedience. Therefore, note that God will, in His grace, *allow* you to disobey—but will climactically “win” this battle. He will finish what He started and will bring us all to full transformation.

*“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure”* (1 John 3:1–3), and *“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Philippians 1:6).

### **In the Here and Now**

Please remember that God transforms us for His own purposes—and for His own good pleasure—as described in chapters 1–3. However, we should also know that God’s transformational work in us brings blessing for us too—in the here and now! Obedience provides rest within and peace with God. Uneasiness, grief of soul, and costly spiritual discipline is no fun at all.

Many who have good understanding (orthodoxy) of the truth, and have experienced the salvation provided them in the Lord, have yet to translate that into good behavior (orthopraxy). As a result, they allow themselves to live for self—clinging to the promises and blessings of salvation without growing to be the worshippers God has called them to be. Herein there is no rest. Paul knows this and therefore wrote...

The Corinthians who were recipients of the Gospel are a prime example of believers living for self. They were lacking in true biblical unity and were competitive with one another; they thought too highly of themselves; they lacked discernment and were driven by carnality—so much so that they allowed for fornication, adultery, divorce, and even an incestuous relationship to exist within the church. The Corinthians were allowing lawsuits between brothers and sisters in Christ; they were gluttonous and uncaring for others around them, and even misused and misappropriated the gifts of the Spirit. But still, Paul did not tell them they were unsaved—to the contrary, he told them that as believers they had been sanctified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 6:11) and that they were called to a higher standard of living—a standard that would complement who they were.

### **Some Listed Attributes**

Paul called the Ephesians to walk in *“lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love”* (vs. 2). He purposefully communicated that these attributes would enhance and assist them to *“keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (vs. 3).

## A Closer Look

The first attribute in Paul's list is "*lowliness*." Lowliness is not self-deprecation or false humility. It is a genuine and proper self-perspective—while esteeming others over ourselves. "*Lowliness*" of character marries with meekness and lends to being teachable. Paul told the Philippians, "*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself*" (Philippians 2:3).

The second attribute Paul listed is "*gentleness*." Gentleness is the disposition one should have when dealing with others. We must never handle others rudely or with harshness. James said that "*the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy*" (James 3:17).

The third attribute is "*longsuffering*." Longsuffering describes restraint in the face of opposition. It is calmness and patience under provocation or misfortune. "Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (Colossians 3:12–14).

Finally, Paul encouraged the Ephesians to be patient with each other, "*bearing with one another in love*." He indicated that lowliness, gentleness, and patience goes hand in hand with keeping "*the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*." To bear with another's weaknesses or shortcomings is to have enduring toleration. Toleration is not endorsement of wrong. It is simply a believer's way of trusting the Lord as He leads, guides, and matures His own people. Paul told the Romans, "*We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves*" (Romans 15:1).

Some people seem naturally gifted with a calm, quiet, patient, and gentle disposition. For others these attributes don't come so easily. However, as we see in Paul's letter to the Galatians, all these manifestations are developed in the believer by work of the Spirit. He said, "*...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...*" (Galatians 5:22–23).

It is not necessary to point out that fruit grows on a maturing tree even as the fruit of the Spirit grows in the life of a maturing believer.

## Grow in Unity

The lack of spiritual maturity in the Western Church has given place for disunity and unhealthiness. Rather than seeking to strive for "*the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*," many choose rather to jump from relationship to relationship and church to church looking for what makes them feel comfortable rather than for those things that will provide them with depth and breadth. It is no surprise that divisions and offenses will come; however, as maturing believers we are called to work together for the common good and live peaceably with all.

Those who are maturing will grow to greater and greater peace with others—who are likewise growing. We learn to be patient and forgiving. We learn to find ways to communicate with wisdom and gentleness.

### **If and When**

At times, the immature resist the grace and fruitfulness of the Spirit and choose to walk after the flesh. When we find ourselves in the midst of unreconciled conflict, it is best to give the person(s) space and time in the Lord. This removes us from the situation and allows God to work in their lives—without our interference. It may also allow for the mature to pray, evaluate, and grow themselves. Even “mature” believers fall short.

Paul told the mature, *“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men”* (Romans 12:18). If divisions and offenses are unresolved, and if those who have caused division remain unrepentant, we are commanded to withdraw ourselves completely. Paul wrote, *“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them”* (Romans 16:17), and *“Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition”* (Titus 3:10). To Timothy he wrote, *“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself”* (1 Timothy 6:3–5).

### **Unity in the Truth**

Biblical unity is based upon truth. Truth is found in the Lord. As we grow in *“the calling with which [we] were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,”* based upon the truth, God is glorified. We are called to this! For *“there is [only] one body [of believers] and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”* (vss. 4–6).

The *“body”* Paul referred to is the redeemed. The *“Spirit”* is the Holy Spirit. The *“one hope”* is life everlasting, with *“one Lord,”* our Savior Jesus Christ. The *“one faith”* is the Gospel. *“One baptism”* is immersion into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, and finally, the *“one God and Father of us all”* is the only living and true God—there is no other (see Isaiah 44:6–8, Isaiah 45:5–6).

Paul’s reference to *“one God and Father of us all”* (vs. 6) does not suggest that all people are children of God. Here he refers to the redeemed.

Earlier we learned that many believe God is the *"Father of all"* men. He indeed is the Creator of all men—but not *"Father."* There are certain persons who have been referred to as being *"of their father the devil"* (John 8:44). Therefore, the popular notion that we are all children of God needs correction. God is not *"Father"* to the rebellious and unbelieving. Those who refuse to believe remain among those who are *"of their father the devil."* They are not named among those who have been adopted into the family of God and therefore cannot proclaim, *"Abba, Father"* (see Galatians 3:26–4:7).

Paul wrote that God dwells *"in you all."* As mentioned above, this statement only refers to the redeemed. God does not dwell in all men. Moreover, God works *"through"* His Church (*"you all"*) for His own purposes, and is certainly *"above all."* He is King, Lord, and the only true and living God. He is above all of His creation. Therefore, the expression *"above all"* does apply to the non-redeemed/non-regenerated even as it does of those who have trusted Him for salvation.

### **The Triune Nature of God**

Of note is the fact that Paul mentioned all three persons of the Trinity in this exhortation. He wrote, *"there is one body and one Spirit [the Holy Spirit], just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord [Jesus Christ], one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all..."* (vss. 4–6a).

There should be no arguing about the Trinity, yet over the centuries religious leaders and so-called scholars have analyzed, denied, and debated the doctrines of the triune nature of the Godhead.

There is only one God. He has revealed Himself as the personal, transcendent, eternal, sovereign Creator of all things. He is the first and last, the only Savior and Lord; there is no other! He is eternally self-existent and has revealed Himself in the tri-unity of three persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three distinct persons, but one God.

Some of the aberrant teachings about God suggest that He is a tri-unity of three personalities—not persons; that Jesus is not God; that Jesus is a lesser god—a created being; that there are other Gods; that the Holy Spirit is not a distinct member of the Godhead but a force or energy; and that Jesus is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All of these heretical teachings must be rejected and condemned.

Rather than take up space and time documenting more error, we should document what the Bible does teach about the triune nature of God. Here are three basic points:

- 1) The Scriptures teach that there is only one God and that He is the Father.

In Isaiah God asks the following question, *"To whom will you liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?"* and then answers, *"...I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me"* (Isaiah 46:5 and 9).

Of Himself God said, *"Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me"* (Isaiah 43:10). He said, *"I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God"* (Isaiah 44:6). Moreover, Jesus taught His disciples to pray using the expression, *"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name..."* (Matthew 6:9). Therefore, with only these few verses in mind, along with Paul's expression *"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and in you all"* (vs. 6), it is clear that there is only one God: The Father.

2) The Bible teaches that Jesus is God, the Son of the Father.

Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. He Himself is God incarnate (in flesh), and as such has been revealed to man. *"In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"* (see Colossians 2:9).

John, when writing his gospel narrative reminded the reader that Jesus is the eternally existent God, is the Creator and giver of life, that He came in the flesh, and that He is the only begotten Son of God the Father. He wrote, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men... the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:1–5 and 14).

Isaiah recorded God saying, *"I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."* (Isaiah 44:6). Jesus speaking to John in the book of Revelation said that He is the first and the last. *"Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that lives and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen"* (Revelation 1:17b–18a). Therefore, carefully comparing these verses we are forced to conclude that Jesus is a liar, God was a liar, or that Jesus is God: (*"the first and the last"*).

Secondly, God tells us in the Old Testament, He is the only Savior. *"You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am He: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no Savior"* (Isaiah 43:10–11). In the New Testament letter to Titus, Paul called Jesus our Savior. He wrote, *"looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us"* (Titus 2:13–14a), and yet Peter in his second letter called Jesus the Savior. He wrote, *"an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* (2 Peter 1:11). He also said we are to *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."* (2 Peter 3:18). John called Jesus the Savior when he wrote, *"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world"* (1 John 4:14). Therefore, even as we identified earlier, a careful comparison of these verses will force us to conclude that either God was lying; Paul, Peter, and John were lying; or that Jesus is the one and only true and living God—the Savior of the world.

### 3) The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is God.

When Jesus was publicly baptized, an interesting series of events occurred. Matthew recorded that *“when He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’”* (Matthew 4:16–17).

Please note here the presence of Jesus (the Son who was being baptized), the Father (Who spoke from heaven), and the Holy Spirit (Who descended like a dove). In this passage alone, we see all three members of the Godhead.

Secondly, we see the Holy Spirit referred to as God when Peter was questioning Ananias and Sapphira. Following a carefully planned act of deception, Peter said, *“Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit.”* He continued, *“Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God”* (Acts 5:1–4). Clearly, Peter refers to the Holy Spirit as God.

### **Three in One, One God—Three Persons**

The three short sections above should be enough to support the further truth found in John’s epistle, where he wrote, *“For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one”* (1 John 5:7).

All this is to say that *“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, [but] has in these last days spoken to us by His Son”* (Hebrews 1-2), and that His Son is the promised Messiah, Immanuel, God incarnate, as promised to all the *“fathers”* through the prophets, and testified to in the law. He is God the Son!

### **Ephesians 4:7–16**

*“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’ (Now this, “He ascended”—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”*



## Gifts

God has graciously equipped His Church with gifts designed to bring edification and comfort. It is by His own will that He gives those gifts—and that He sovereignly assigns those gifts to the individuals of His own discretion.

God has chosen to provide segregated gifts so that the unified body of Christ might be a cooperative of individual family members who serve one another. The purpose herein teaches us that we are not independent of one another—but are called to serve and support each other. When everyone in the body of Christ is serving, the ministry is fruitful and enjoyable—bringing edification to all.

Specific to the list Paul mentions here is apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. These five gifts identify offices and attributes.

An Apostle is one who is sent. In the first century Church all the apostles were eye witnesses to the ministry and resurrection of Jesus. Since that time, the office of apostle might be better understood as what we commonly call a missionary. Typically we send missionaries into parts of the world where ministry is not occurring. Therefore, the missionary is sent to reach others with the gospel and establish a Christian body where one does not already exist.

A prophet is one who speaks for the Lord and brings exhortation, edification, and comfort. An evangelist is one whose primary gifting is to call those who don't know the Lord to faith—and therefore salvation. An evangelist's primary focus is outside the Church. A pastor is one who oversees the spiritual life of the Church. His role is to lead and protect. Finally, a teacher is one who brings biblical instruction to the other members of the Church.

Often, men who are called as apostles demonstrate (at some level or another) all five attributes named herein. However, as a church is developed God will raise up others with similar or distinguishable gifts that the work of ministry may be done by all.

It is God's will that a church be led by a pastor. However, under the leadership of a pastor each local church should function by the interaction and service of all. The members are called to come together and serve one another for the edification of the whole.

Paul taught that the gifts named herein are designed to allow others to grow up in the Lord and be active participants in the ministry. However, far too often, churches have a select few who serve and the others remain at the receiving end. If this pattern is left unaddressed, the church will become unhealthy and develop into a place where people congregate to “watch the show.” This form of “churching” grows self-centered/self-serving members.

A healthy church will allow for every member to serve and should encourage the same. Every believer has been given one or more practical, functional, and spiritual gifts. They too are listed in the Scriptures. For example, in 1 Corinthians 12:27–30 we read, *“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?”* Earlier in the same chapter Paul wrote, *“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills”* (1 Corinthians 12:4–11).

Gifts are given so that believers may humbly serve others, complement one another, building up the body through exhortation, edification, and comfort. We all need each other in order to be a growing healthy church.

A physical body needs a heart, a liver, lungs, hands, legs, feet, etc. As individual members making up the spiritual body of Christ, we are designed to work together even as the physical. *“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.* (1 Corinthians 12:12–26).

*“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness” (Romans 12:3–8).*

### **The Church in the Church Age**

Paul said that the gifts Jesus gives His church began *“when He ascended on high...”* (vs. 8). He also mentioned that after His ascension the disciples were told to gather in Jerusalem and wait for the *“promise of the Father”* (Acts 1:4), for the promised Holy Spirit indwelling would empower the Church with the gifts and authorities to accomplish His will throughout the Church Age (see Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:5).

### **Descended into the Lower Parts of the Earth?**

The fact that Jesus *“descended into the lower parts of the earth”* (vs. 9) prior to His ascension has been a subject of some controversy. However, Jesus did do just that.

Some insight into this discussion can be gleaned from the words Jesus gave to one of the thieves who were crucified with Him at Calvary. There at the cross, Jesus told the repentant criminal, *“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise”* (Luke 23:43). Although it seems that the terms *“Paradise”* and *“Heaven”* are used interchangeably at times, the word *“Paradise”* as used in this text describes what we know as *“Abraham’s Bosom.”*

Apparently Abraham’s Bosom was a segregated section of what was known to be *“the place of the dead”* in Old Covenant times. Although the Jews used the term *“Hades”* to describe the place of the dead, *“Paradise”* was not what we would refer to as Hell. It seems that *“Paradise”* was the place where the faithful were located until the resurrection of Jesus. This is delineated in the account of the rich man and Lazarus.

In Luke's gospel we read,

*"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead'" (Luke 16:19–31).*

The rich man was tormented in the flames of Hell while Lazarus waited in Abraham's Bosom. When the Lord descended into the *"lower parts of the earth,"* He allowed for those waiting in "Paradise" access to the eternal dwelling place with God in Heaven.

Prior to the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, it seems that "Abraham's Bosom" was the *temporary* dwelling place of the faithful. Today, those who die as believers in the Church Age go directly into the presence of the Lord.

Paul wrote, *"We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 5:8).

When Paul wrote that Jesus *"led captivity captive"* (vs. 8), he may have been indicating that those who were captive in "Abraham's Bosom" were finally allowed access to "Heaven", and therefore "Paradise" was no longer a necessary component in the spiritual dimension.

Furthermore, it seems that when Jesus went into the *"lower parts of the earth"* (vs. 9), He also proclaimed His victory to those who were disobedient—in that place we *do* refer to as Hell. Peter spoke to this when he said, *"...He [Jesus] went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water,"* and *"For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh"* (1 Peter 3:19b–20) and (1 Peter 4:6a).

All men, whether they were born prior to the Church Age, within the Church Age, or thereafter, are both aware of the truth (see Romans 1) and accountable to God. It should be noted that Jesus' preaching to the unrighteous dead was not in order to provide them a "second chance," for *"it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."* (Hebrews 9:27).

### **Sound Doctrine**

In verse 14 Paul indicated the importance of sound doctrine; he does not want the church *"tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."* This exhortation carries special emphasis in a day when doctrine is ignored or given the back seat—while unity at the expense of truth takes the lead. Many "churches" today have exciting programs, but without solid biblical teaching they are more likely social clubs than they are discipleship centers. The ecumenical movement is nothing more than a return to Babylonian philosophy and should be condemned as such. It is *"the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting"* and so is the pastor or church leadership team that builds a church at the expense of the truth. It indeed is the building of men—not the building of God.

As mentioned above, Paul does point the Church toward genuine spiritual unity—based upon the truth. In fact, true spiritual unity can be based upon nothing less. Man-centered humanistic unity will fail. True Biblical spiritual unity will bring believers into greater and greater harmony and health in the Lord.

### **Ephesians 4:17–24**

*"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."*

Having communicated what Christ has done for us, Paul called the believers to live in Biblical spiritual unity with others in the family of God. Now he calls for every believer to live his or her life by a standard that testifies to the *"life of God"* (vs. 18) we each enjoy. He desires that we walk in a way that brings glory to the name of Jesus.

We are not to do those things that distract from or diminish the testimony of Christ in us. Paul told Timothy, *"The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity"* (2 Timothy 2:19). Therefore, as believers we are called to a lifestyle that is other than the one in which we lived prior to coming to faith in Jesus.

In the Proverbs we read, *“In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil”* (Proverbs 16:6). It is certain that our Lord provided the atonement for us *“in mercy and truth.”* It is now our privilege to honor the Lord by departing from evil.

### **A New Way of Living**

Before coming to faith in Christ the Ephesians would have been accustomed to the lifestyle embraced by others in their culture. The Ephesians were Gentiles and therefore Paul uses the expression to identify the believers with others in their community. However, inasmuch as they are Gentiles, he makes a distinction between the now believing and the unbelieving. He identifies several characteristics that distinguish believers from unbelievers.

### **Futility of Mind**

Paul shows that unbelievers walk in *“the futility of the mind”* (vs. 17), having their *“understanding darkened”* (vs. 18). When one is without a true Biblical understanding of God (the eternal purposes of God in creation, truth, salvation, etc.), then the activities of the mind and purpose of life become meaningless. If one believes he or she is a cosmic accident, that there is no Creator, and that death is the cessation of existence, it is impossible to believe there is any value or purpose in living. Furthermore, if one believes we are a cosmic accident, they also have no foundation for the development of moral values and/or thoughts of consequence for immoral behavior. Therefore, not only does the life of the one without understanding seem meaningless, but the life of others likewise. For this reason, the one who is *“alienated from the life of God,”* and by *“ignorance”* suffers *“blindness of heart”* (vs. 18), they will become those who Paul describes as *“past feeling”* (vs. 19). For example, these persons may steal, kill, or lie without restraint or conviction. Paul says they *“have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness”* (vs. 19). They are selfish and lawless. They are amoral (without morals or a moral compass) because they have no recognized standard by which to guide the principles of right or wrong. However, even in their denial of truth, the truth remains.

A moral universe implies that we live in a universe ordered by God. Therefore, there are consequences relating to decisions and actions. Those who deny this fact see humanity without a proper perspective and as the result suffer *“spiritual/mental illness.”* They need salvation and, in spite of their *“ignorance”* (vs. 18), must give account to God.

### **Not You! Not Me!**

As believers, we are not *“past feeling”* (vs. 19). We are those who have been chosen in the Lord, and therefore *“should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles”* (vs. 17); we are called to a lifestyle of love and honor for God. We are called to a life of love for our fellow man. We are called to live in the Spirit and within the framework described by Jesus. He said, *“The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.*

*And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29–31).*

When rightly loving God these commands become the natural outflow of our lives. The rule becomes us and is the great litmus test for how to live! We do not live without restraint, without moral values, without honor before and to the Lord. Indeed! Paul correctly reminded the Ephesians that they had not *"so learned Christ"* (vs. 20)—and the application is ours today.

### **What Every Believer Should Know**

The Spirit of God dwells within the believer and provides leadership and consciousness of good and bad, right and wrong, truth and error. Of The Holy Spirit's leadership Jesus said, *"When He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you"* (John 16:13–15).

These words were spoken prior to the Church Age, and thus, He used the future tense. But now, in the Church Age, He (the Holy Spirit) permanently resides in every believer providing us His powerful and much needed inner working and leadership.

### **If Indeed?**

Some would suggest Paul was questioning the Ephesian disciples when he used the expression *"if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus"* (vs. 21). However, in this case it is best to see the conjunction *"if"* as an encouragement toward a moment of self-evaluation. The believers were being told to put off the old man and put on the new. Reflection was in order—as all of us have room for growth.

Those who are born again have been *"taught by Him"* and know *"the truth [that] is in Jesus."* Therefore, the putting off of the old man and the putting on new becomes the natural outflow of our growth in Him! Resistance is futility—for God is changing us and will not fail to accomplish His plans. Rebellion and resistance only produces the difficulties every believer desires (or will desire) to avoid (see Hebrews 12:1–11).

### **Put Off**

Believers are called to *"put off"* the *"former conduct"* we once embraced. We must recognize that the *"former conduct"* should be just that: *"former."* The way we lived prior to coming to faith in Jesus should be put behind us. We now see that *"the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts"* (vs. 22) is no longer the description of the believer. We are no longer deceived. We now know that the *"lusts"* which once enticed us are only a trap, cause pain, remove us from the fullness of the blessings obedience provides. Now we are called to *"be renewed in the spirit of [our] mind[s]"* (vs. 23). We have a change in thinking with translates into a change of living. Moreover, now (as regenerated

people) we have the inner working of the Spirit who provides to us the power to live differently. For this reason, Paul said that *“those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* Then added, *“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit”* (Galatians 5:24–25). Furthermore, the Spirit who now dwells in us provides a fruitful new life. We now anticipate *“the fruit of the Spirit...love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law”* (Galatians 5:22–23).

This fact does not suggest that believers won’t fall short and/or act out in sin. Sadly, we do! However, there is no excuse for a believer living in intentional willful sin. We are (as stated above) called to live in and for the Lord. Therefore, the believer is called to *“put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”* (vss. 22–23) As mentioned about, the renewal of the mind is the key. It speaks of changing the way we think about sin. Believers are called to a change of mind concerning sin and sinful behavior—and one way or another your mind will be changed. For some this comes easy—through academic education and Holy Spirit stimulated growth. For others—by chastening!

### **Put On**

As believers, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, we are not only called to *“put off”* the old man but are called to *“put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness”* (vs. 24). We are new creations in Christ—and should act like it. We have been made the righteousness of God in Jesus—and therefore must live righteously. We have been set apart unto the Lord, for His glory and purpose—therefore, as set apart, we no longer take part in wickedness and sin but walk as sanctified for the glory of God.

### **The Doing**

Putting on the *“new man”* is the work of God! We are *“created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness”* (vs. 24). Therefore, putting on the *“new man”* is no more the work of the believer than is *“putting off the old.”*

When we were born again, we were enabled to *“put off”* our *“former conduct”*—by God’s power and grace. Now, as regenerated people, we are equipped to *“put on”* the new. Trying to *“put off the old”* and *“put on the new”* by human will or self-driven performance is futility. It is agonizing, grievous, and disappointing. God is the one who has and will continue working in us.

### **Allow Me to Illustrate**

Our growth is like that of a tree. We start off small, frail, and vulnerable, but over time and through maturity we stand tall, weather storms, and bear fruit.

We don’t and won’t grow faster by human ambition. We won’t and don’t produce fruit faster by human effort, strife, or strain. We grow in the Lord—as He works in us.



We can resist God’s work, but we cannot help the Lord bring about the growth He alone provides. We must rest in Him and “allow” Him to work. Of a certainty, life in a greenhouse (like that a believer *should* find in the Church), may prove helpful—even as nutrients, water, and light nourishes a tree. In the same way, we all need the nurturing nutrients of the Holy Spirit, the washing of the water of the word, and the illumination gained by sound doctrine and biblical Christian fellowship. But, rushing the process of growth will only frustrate and exhaust—it is “of the flesh.”

### **The Things We Can and the Things We Can’t**

Later in this chapter we will see that we can (by the grace and power of God) stop stealing, get a job, or give to those in need. However, when we are growing, we may find that being angry without falling into sin, or consistently providing good and gracious words when dealing with others may prove us deficient. Moreover, if we take seriously the injunction to “*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice*” (vs. 31), or the command to be “*kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you*” (vss. 31–32), we will see that “*the fruit of the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:22) will develop over time—rather than through human effort or struggle. Have fun trying to love your enemies—in the flesh. Have fun trying to make tender your hard heart. This is the work of God—and His work alone.

### **How He May Do It!**

As believers, we came to the Lord in humility—wretched and broken. We came with nothing in our hands to offer Him. This is good to remember. When we “remember the pit from which we were drawn,” we find it easier to forgive those who hurt us. If we grow away from the “who we were” perspective (without wallowing in our past), we are prone toward a ready brokenness which will keep us tenderhearted. A true perspective of one’s self will indeed help put off malice, bring down a “better than thou” attitude, and root out bitterness. We find that it is the proud and “accomplished” who fail to remember their own present/early condition (see Ephesians 2) and begin to harden their hearts or hold others in contempt. When this occurs, the Lord will provide us the lessons in humility once again needed. Save yourself from these schoolings by remembering who you are and from where you have come.

### **Ephesians 4:25-32**

*“Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another. ‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”*

## Specific Sin—Put It Away

In the previous section we learned that believers are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. Therefore, we are called to *“put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness”* (vs. 24). We are new creations in Christ! We have been made the righteousness of God—in Him. We have been set apart unto the Lord for His purpose and glory.

When Paul broke down the putting off of our old man (the past behavior), he highlighted several practical areas for change—by the power of the Holy Spirit. That said, having been made new in Christ from within warrants an outward change by Spirit-led submission to the will of God.

Paul began this section with the injunction to *“[put] away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another”* (vs. 25). He wanted believers to value their relationships—especially in the Church. To this end we are called to tell the truth!

### What is Truth?

Truth is the exact representation of the substance and attributes found in the original. Many have failed to understand this simple definition. Even Pilate antagonistically asked Jesus, *“What is truth?”* (John 18:38). In answer, He gave no reply. However, earlier in Jesus’ ministry He did address the subject and provided us insight.

Truth is the absolute representation or replication of the authentic. Truth in no way distorts or alters what is actual, factual, and original. For this reason, Jesus could say *“I am...the truth...”* (John 14:16). He Himself is the authentic, original, Creator—the beginning.

Knowing Jesus is “The Truth,” allows for and mandates that we are truth tellers. The truth sets us (and others) free. Telling the truth provides those around us with the examples and information they need to make good decisions and model right actions. When we tell the truth to one another we represent what is right without subversion, dilution, or perversion. Lies and deception must be *“put off”* by the believer. Perversions, deceptions and misinformation brings hurt and destruction—and must not be the practice of Christians.

Some may suggest that telling the truth to *“one another”* might lack wisdom (illustrations omitted). However, the Scriptures tell us otherwise. In the proverbs we read, *“He who speaks truth declares righteousness...The truthful lip shall be established forever..., [and] lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal truthfully are His delight”* (Proverbs 12:17–22 abridged).

## **To Tell the Truth**

Earlier in this chapter Paul reminded the Ephesians that they should be “*speaking the truth in love*” (vs. 15). In John’s first epistle we read, “*My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth*” (1 John 3:18). Therefore, as believers we are called to love one another by speaking the truth. As we walk in truth, and as we represent the truth, our love is manifested for those with whom we fellowship. Anything less than truthfulness is a misrepresentation of who we are.

It should also be noted that Paul’s specific reference herein is that we “*speak truth with [our] neighbor, for we are members of one another*” (vs. 25). His primary focus then was unrelated to evangelism or in dealings with those outside the Church. He was specifically dealing with the inner workings of our fellowship with one another as believers.

In fellowship with our brothers and sisters (in Christ) we may come to see that some do not want to hear the truth. This may provide the temptation to lessen, weaken, or diminish the truth in order to gain favor. However, as members of the body of Christ, we show sincere love for one another, maintain the unity of the Spirit, and enhance genuine growth when we tell the truth without compromise. Half-truths and deceptions will eventually be discovered to the detriment of both parties. Therefore, do not withhold the truth when called upon, required, or compelled to provide it.

## **Wisdom**

Truth must be presented in love and meekness. Truth must always be presented in clarity and with a focus on how anything less prejudices those to whom we communicate. If we diminish and/or modify the truth in order to make it more appealing, we are pre-assuming and therefore pre-judging those with whom we intend to communicate. This act in itself is less than love.

However, if we are aware that there will be a lack of receptivity in the one(s) to whom we wish to communicate, we have instruction on how to deal with it. The methods range from Church discipline to a refrain from communicating at all (see Matthew 18:15–17, Proverbs 9:7–8, and Revelation 22:11). Even in such cases we are not to diminish or distort the truth.

## **When Withholding the Truth Is the Right Thing to Do!**

Much could be said about discerning who your “*neighbor*” (vs. 25) actually is. Paul shows us his definition when he wrote “*members of one another*” (vs. 25)—of the body of Christ. Discernment becomes necessary when identifying an enemy.

For example, those who hid the Jews during the holocaust “*lied*” to those who came in aggression against those being protected. Rahab the harlot “*lied*” to those who questioned her about the spies who had come in to Jericho in order to take the land (see Joshua 2). The midwives of Egypt “*lied*” to the Pharaoh about the births of Israelite children after they had been instructed to kill them (see Exodus 1). However, all these misrepresentations were by nature provided as love for the others—

for the good of those they were called to protect. Therefore, in these rare occasions, God justified the false testimony of those who were thus motivated.

Secondly, one might suggest that the withholding of certain details or information might be necessary when protecting others or when the information is beyond the proper processing of those who might obtain it. For example, if revealing information about certain activities or decisions would bring harm to those uninvolved, unassociated, or below the proper level of maturity, maintaining silence may prove critical. One example would be the revealing of information gained through a confession or personal request for prayer. The Bible tells us that discretion is virtuous. *“My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding, that you may preserve discretion, and your lips may keep knowledge”* (Proverbs 5:1–2). *“As a ring of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.”* (Proverbs 11:22).

### **Bring Edification**

It is noted that Paul said that we are to *“let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers”* (vs. 29). We are those who are called to speak the truth and guard against the corruption of those things we communicate. Corrupt communications are distortions of truth, things that may be belittling, or those things that originate in gossip. Gossip is destructive and only serves to harm others. Our “speaking” should only be of those things that are *“good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers”* (vs. 29).

### **Seek Not to Destroy**

*“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice”* (vs. 31). Therefore, those things that originate from a bitter spirit, the desire for the destruction of others, or unrighteous and selfish anger should be put away. We are called to *“be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you”* (vs. 32). We have been treated with grace, mercy, and forgiveness. We are likewise to offer others the same treatment we have received—and desire—from the Lord.

### **Be Angry?**

When Paul said, *“be angry, and do not sin”* and *“do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil”* (vs. 26–27), he was giving an exhortation toward the proper timing of communications in order to remove the darkness our adversary traffics. Things that are left without proper communication or left unresolved often give room for greater division and harm. Therefore, believers are called to patiently listen, communicate, and work toward the resolution of those things that may have inspired pain and/or anger.

There is a righteous anger that believers may experience. However, if not handled correctly that anger can turn to unrighteousness. We are called to *“be angry”* at those things that stand against righteousness and truth. But, we must learn that there are right and wrong ways to be angry. There is a wrong way to be right.

It might be good herein to also note that there is a right way to be wrong. When we are in the wrong, we are called to be humble, teachable, and seek forgiveness and restoration.

### **Do Not Steal**

*“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need”* (vs. 28). When we covet what others have—or worse—take those things that belong to another, we error! We should be thankful for what we have, celebrate the joys others have, and mind our own responsibilities. Moreover, as the Lord prospers us, we must be willing to give to those who have need. Our stewardship before the Lord is to work with the resources He has given us—not only so we might obtain those things required, but that we might *“have something to give him who has need.”*

### **Grieve Not the Holy Spirit**

Finally, Paul wrote, *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption”* (vs. 30). The sealing power of the Holy Spirit guarantees our eternal salvation (see also Ephesians 1:13). However, the practice of sin is nonetheless grievous to the Lord—and harmful to ourselves and others. Therefore, *“put it off”*—*“stop it.”* As stated, we have been given the power of God to stop lying, stealing, fornicating, committing adultery, gossiping, etc. The temptation toward acts of sin will lessen as we mature, and the propensities of the sinful nature will be overcome by the fruit of the Spirit. However, wrestling with the propensities of the flesh and outright choices to do wrong are worlds apart. A believer has the power to stop fornicating, stop stealing, stop lying, etc., and is called to obedience. We are called to forsake criticism of others, self-exaltation, self-righteousness and gossip. We are called to Christ-centered, others-centered living. The Lord calls us to be *“tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you”* (vs. 32).

We are called to align our Orthodoxy to our Orthopraxy!