

Ephesians 4:25
Speaking The Truth
Market Street Fellowship
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Speaking The Truth

We're going to continue looking at the book of Ephesians this morning. If you have your Bible's you can turn to chapter four. I did not share last week. But the previous two Sundays I was introducing this next section of Ephesians that really starts with Ephesians 4:25. If you'll recall, we are entering into a portion of this Epistle that many refer to as New Testament instruction, or Biblical instruction. And it has been the purpose of the last two messages to try to understand what Paul is doing in these sorts of passages.

If you haven't heard those messages, I'd encourage you to grab the CD. These kinds of Scriptures are some of the most misunderstood and misapplied Scriptures in the Bible. These are what Christians often wrongly understand to be a list of do's and don'ts, rules and regulations for how to live acceptably before God.

Well, while these sorts of Scriptures are instructional in nature, they certainly are NOT Paul's descriptions of ways to please God in the flesh, or live acceptably before Him. If such a thing were even possible, He would never have needed to send His Son. If such a thing were possible, He would not have given Christ to be the very life of your soul. The only life acceptable to God is the life of His Son. And that is why the love of God has given you Christ Himself as the life of all who believe.

And so we need to reckon with what Paul is doing in these instructional passages. And that is what we tried to do in the last two times that I shared. What are these apparent "do's and don'ts"? Why is there a section usually near the end of his letters that are instructional in nature? I'll just say a couple things by way of reminder, and then I want to get into looking at verse 25.

If you remember, I divided up these "do's and don't" sayings into three general categories...Three slightly different things that Paul is trying to do with verses like these. And as I said, I don't think Paul saw them in three categories. I think Paul just spoke the truth. But for us who are so accustomed to misunderstanding these verses, for us who are so accustomed to applying them to the wrong man and understanding them in the wrong way...for us it might be helpful to understand these Scriptures in three categories.

The first was the so-called "do's and don'ts" that are really the natural effect or consequence of putting off one entire man and putting on Another, who is Christ Himself. We spent a lot of time looking at this. Growing in Christ, as Paul just has told us in Ephesians 4:22-24, involves putting off what the cross has put away. Putting off the old man together with his lusts and deeds. Growing up in Christ is where the spirit of our mind is renewed in such away that the man that God has rejected, the kind, the seed, of the natural man is circumcised from our soul. And the Man that God has accepted, Christ, the risen Lord and Life of His body, is

established. Christ Himself is put on. Christ is formed in us. Not our attempt to act like Christ. Not our attempt to learn what He said and do what He did. No. That is called religion...and it is hopeless. Christianity is Christ Himself. Christ living in you, formed in you, glorified in you. The putting off of one man and the putting on of another.

And this putting on and putting off business is necessarily and naturally going to involve putting off things that are not out from the seed of Christ, and putting on the things that are aspects of Christ Himself. We said it before: if you kill a tree at the roots, you should expect the leaves and fruits to wither. You should expect that there will be a putting off of the things the axe has already put away.

So you will find Paul saying things, like we find in our verse for today, like "therefore, putting away the lie, speak the truth because you are members of one another." Can you see that Paul is not giving you a list of expected behavioral exercises. Paul is describing what knowing Christ should be working in the souls of those who see Him. **If the cross has put away Adam, then knowing the truth should bring about the end of his fruits. If the cross has established Christ as your life, the knowing the truth should bring about the increase of His fruits.** That is how it works. And that is what Paul is talking about in our verse for today.

Before I jump into that, let me just very briefly mention two other categories. There are also some Scriptures where Paul is telling believers to be wise stewards of their earthen vessel. In other words, he admonishes his churches to make decisions in the earth that are conducive to dwelling in the heavens. Make natural decisions that are conducive to abiding in His Spirit. These are Scriptures like "flee from immorality which wages war against your soul", "fix your eyes above, not on things on the earth", "do not get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit", "do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers". These types of verses.

Once again, these aren't a new testament law. These aren't the seven steps to being a good Christian, or the 3 keys to finding God's purpose for your life. These are choices in the earth that will help keep our souls abiding in heaven. These are issues of wise stewardship of our bodies, our earthen tent.

Thirdly, there are those instructional passages that have to do with roles in relationships and family and government. I explained some of that last week, but I'm going to leave that alone this week because we're going to be looking at it in depth when we get to Ephesians chapter 5.

These are the three main categories of what Christians most often misinterpret to be do's and don'ts of Christianity. Rules for righteous living. They simply are not what our natural mind first understands them to be. But apart from the foundational reality of the cross working in the heart through the revelation of Jesus Christ, that's really how they will appear. There are a couple smaller categories we might mention as we deal with them. But that's enough of a review.

I want to rewind back to Ephesians 4:25. It reads like this:

Eph 4:25 Therefore, putting off the false, "LET EACH ONE OF YOU SPEAK TRUTH WITH HIS NEIGHBOR," for we are members of one another.

As we have gone through this study together, sometimes it has amazed me how we come to a specific verse right when the Lord is dealing with my heart about something. It's that way about this verse having to do with speaking the truth to each other. It just so happens that, right now, that seems to be an incredibly relevant thing to my heart, and I believe to our body.

Why does Paul say this? Why does he say something so obvious? To tell the body of Christ to stop lying, or put off the false, and speak the truth. Shouldn't this go without saying? Isn't this just basic courtesy...even in natural relationships? Why does he say this? Let me answer that in two parts. **First, because the lie, and lying to each other, is a much bigger reality than we could ever imagine. And second, because, whether we realize it or not, we are always speaking lies to one another.**

When Paul tells them to stop lying, or put off the false, he is not talking about fibbing. He's not talking about making up stories, exaggerating, misrepresenting people, lying on the witness stand. All of that should go without saying. Paul is talking about putting away a whole world of thought, and reality, and understanding that no longer applies to you, and no longer defines you because you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

What is the false that he mentions here? What is this lying? I believe that the lying that Paul is referencing here is the way that Christians continue to relate to one another according to a man that God has put away – a man who is the Lie. Lying is when we speak to one another according to a man, a realm, a reality that is no longer what and where we are. **In a word, the lying that Paul is mentioning here is when our relationship with one another keeps alive what God has called dead, when it treats as relevant what God has called buried, and when it isn't according to what God has called life.**

For you and I, lying is what we quite naturally do with one another, when we don't know the truth of God's finished work. Paul says:

2Co 5:14 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. 16 Therefore, from now on, we know no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

If, in Him, all things have become new...lying is when we relate according to what is old. If in Him we have come to life, lying is when we speak according to what is dead. If in Him, God's Word defines all things....lying is when our words are not out from His Word.

And if that is hard for you to understand, you'll have to just give it time...and give it some attention. Here's a rabbit trail. I'm beginning to realize that I put too much effort in trying to say things perfectly, when the Spirit has to reveal it anyway. There's a place for trying to make our words line up as close as possible with truth. And that's good. But then there's another place where we, and most specifically I'm talking about *myself*, try to say it so clearly that even a carnal mind could be tricked into thinking it saw something of Christ.

One time Jesus said that He was the living bread that came out from heaven. And when He got a bunch of blank stares and was asked to explain himself, he said "eat my flesh and drink my blood". And when they all started walking away, he turned to his twelve and said "are you going to go too?". Jesus knew something that day. He knew something that has taken me too long to learn. A heart to know the Lord will find Him. If anyone knocks the door will be open. If anyone seeks, he will find. And, on the other hand, a heart that doesn't want the Lord cannot be helped. Not even if God Almighty sends His Son, opens the door, and says "come!". That's just something I've been thinking about.

Anyway, I'm trying to tell you that lying is more than telling an exaggerated fishing story. Lying to one another in the body of Christ is when we bring the Lie into the body of Christ...and we try to relate in and as Christ's body according to that man and that mind. You see, we have no right to bring that man into Christ. We have no right to bring his mind, his ideas, his fleshly values and reasoning into God's finished work. And when we do, and when we suppose there is something there worth saying, something there worth keeping, something there of true relating, **then we are lying to one another**. We are contradicting what God has done.

You and I who have come to live in the One who calls Himself the Truth, must come to know that truth and speak that truth to one another. You see, the truth is such a wonderful and yet such a severe thing. The truth, as it is in Christ, is what God knows to be real. You and I cannot change it. We cannot change it or effect it or altar it in any way to any degree. It stands as God's finished work. It stands as an immovable mountain of objective reality...and it will never change. Not for you. Not for me. Not for anything or anyone. It is offered to everyone. It is offered and given and poured out upon and in every single human who desires to know it. It is given to every man, woman, and child who will acknowledge their need of it, and realize they are in contradiction to it. But it never bends or varies or moves. There is really only one question that you and I have to decide. There is really only one question that exists. And that question is not what do you want to believe in. The question is – do you want to know this truth? Do you want to participate in what is true, or do you want to continue on in the lie.

We may not realize that we do it, but you and I are always trying to bring our ideas into the truth and mix it all together. We're always trying to take the things that we think we've learned about God, about life, about purpose,...bring it on into the Person of Truth and set it up on our nightstand like a familiar book. We bring the lie into the truth, and try to relate to one another as though it has always been there. Well, it HAS always been there in our mind. But it is a foreign particle, an alien life-form, an extraneous and irrelevant and contrary reality to the One in whom we now dwell. **It is not part of the Truth because it did not come out from the Truth.**

We are now members of one another...joined to one another by sharing one Life. We share one life and that life is named the Truth. But here we go dragging our ideas into Him. Dragging our ideas of righteousness. Dragging our ideas of purpose. Dragging our ideas of love or ministry or church. Bring them all into Christ. Go ahead...there's plenty of room in here for everybody's ideas. There's plenty of ways to justify and dignify our lies.

Job was a man who had a lot of ideas about God. Job had amassed quite an amazing collection of sayings and proverbs and lessons that he had learned about

the truth. He put them all together in some beautiful lyrics, he justified Himself before God, he knew of nothing that he said or did that was contrary to God. He was quite innocent in his eyes.

And I'm not saying that Job did this with malicious intent. Quite the contrary. I'm sure that Job was absolutely justified in his own heart. I'm sure that the truth of the situation appeared to be quite obvious to this man. After all, he had had so many life experiences that seemed to back it up. So many years of blessing. So much to point to and say "this must be God". Job was a man who spoke and lived as though he knew the truth.

But then something happened. And I was struck with this last week when Rod read from the book of Job. Something happened to Job that changed everything in a moment. What happened? Job saw the Person who calls Himself the Truth. And here is what he said.

Job 42:1 Then Job answered the LORD and said: 2 "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. 3 You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 4 Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' 5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. 6 Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."

If only Job would have come to this disposition before he spent 40 chapters explaining what he thought he knew. If only we would come to this disposition before we spend 40 years living what we think we know.

What am I trying to say. I guess I'm trying to say that part of being renewed in the spirit of your mind, putting off the old, and putting on the new, is going to dramatically involve how we relate to one another. I'm not talking about trying to be nice, trying to be tolerant, trying to do anything. I'm talking about the person, place, and state of being of one man CEASING to be the reality in which we relate to one another. Why? Because for you and I who have been born of God's Spirit, it is **a lie**.

Jason, give me some examples. Well, I always get in trouble when I give examples. It's much safer to just let the Spirit make application. But...I'll say a couple things. It would be a lie for me to preach to you anything other than what I've seen in the light of Christ's appearing. It is a lie to bring my good Christian ideas into the Lord's body, my ideas about Scripture, my opinions. Where I am presenting my opinions and ideas to you about Christ, I am lying. Perhaps not intentionally, but I have seen that my ideas about God have no place in His church. The church is the body of Christ, where His mind defines all things. And so I have a deep invested interest in always being wrong, so that I can see Him who is right, and speak to you out from that view. I'm not pretending that I always do that well. But that is how I understand this to work. **Everything other than Christ's mind working in Christ's body is a lie.**

It would be a lie for me to encourage in you anything that I can tell has no place in Him. No matter how much you want to hear it, or think you need to hear it, I would be lying to you if I sought to comfort you in anything other than the truth as it is in

Christ. I have had people come to me many times needing to hear a comforting word. A specific word of promise. A word of hope. A Word from the Lord. The problem was that the specific word that they wanted didn't exist in Christ as far as I had ever seen...and so I could not give it. It is a lie to comfort you apart from the truth. It is a lie to present you with a solution that is separated from Christ.

It would be a lie for me to pretend that a good relationship with you in the flesh is the same thing as fellowship, because fellowship is the sharing of Christ. I'll have a relationship with you that is entirely natural, but I will not call it fellowship.

You get the point. Paul says that we are putting off the old, being renewed in the spirit of our mind, and putting on the new man. And that is having it's natural effect in us. If it is a genuine work of the Spirit through the revelation of Jesus Christ, then there are unstoppable consequences. What are those consequences? **We are beginning to stop relating to one another according to what was ONCE true of us, what was ONCE real, what USED to be what and where and who we are. And we are beginning to relate to one another according to an entirely new universe of reality. We are beginning to relate to one another, and speak to one another, according to the truth as it is in Christ.**

Now that is not the same as saying "the truth as it is for a Christian". No. The truth as it is in Christ is something much different. It is a world of reality and substance that is inaccessible to the natural man or the natural mind. It is an experience of resurrected life, the life of God being shared by the corporate body of Christ. This is world into which the natural eye cannot look, nor can the mind of man imagine. And yet it is the world of truth that begins to be the very nature and reality of place and time and person of what we share.

Sharing Christ is much more than sharing beliefs and emotions and books and ideas. Sharing Christ is sharing the resurrected life of the Son of God seen by, and experienced in, the redeemed souls of those who are growing in faith. Why does Paul say to speak the truth to one another? Because, he says, we are now members of one another. We are actually members of each other.

Long ago, in the Old Covenant, God commanded what man could not do. We all know that the law was precisely that. The law was God's expectation that described Christ but, in turn, condemned man. The Law was the righteousness of God commanded upon men in the law of the letter. And we could not do it. But the New Covenant is the righteousness of God put within man in the law of the Spirit. The law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. And now He is in us what could never come by us. Now He reveals in us who we could never be.

Well, one of those commandments that we could not do went like this "you must love your neighbor as yourself". Who, in the flesh, could ever really do that? How can the natural man, who is entirely occupied with and motivated by self actually love another like he loves himself? Well, just like everything else in that covenant, the commandment upon the flesh pointed to a fulfillment that was to come in Christ. It proved to be an impossibility for the old man, but is experienced when we put on the new man. Every law given to man is realized in the new covenant as an experience of Jesus Christ Himself.

Why am I talking about that particular law. Because it has everything to do with this verse in Ephesians 4:25. Man could not love his neighbor as himself until, through

baptism into Christ, **man became a part of his neighbor. Man could not love another's life as his own until man shared the same life with his neighbor.**

Paul writes:

Rom 12:5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

1Co 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit

1Co 12:25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

This isn't a suggestion for how we ought to picture each other. This is an established fact of the resurrection. This is the truth that we do not see. We are members of one life. And to love the body of Christ is to lay down our own, individual, independent, lives...and live as one. To lay down our own ideas about the body of Christ and learn His. To put away the lie, the ideas of the independent man that you once were...and to put on the truth, and speak the truth as it now is in Him. To relate to one another according to the new world, the new universe of life and reality and substance and truth that is Christ.

Anything less than that is still part of the lie. Anything less than His needs are not the needs of the body. Anything less than His purpose is not the purpose of this body. We do not bring our purposes into Him and call it the purpose of the body. We do not bring OUR individual needs into Christ and call it the needs of the body. No, that is part of the lie. I'm not saying that we overlook one another's natural needs. Acts chapter 6 shows us that those things are to be attended to. But we do not define the needs of the body of Christ by ourselves.

I hope you can hear what I'm saying. This verse is not saying that, because we're now Christians, we should stop fibbing and start telling the truth because we have the same beliefs. This verse is saying that the cross has severed the adamic man from our soul, and therefore, with the coming of Light, we should cease relating to one another according to the things, the ideas, the purposes, and agendas, that are not part of Christ.

We have been baptized into one death. Made to drink of one spirit. Shown one light. And are growing up in one Son. And therefore, only the truth as it is IN that Son is what we must be sharing with one another. Amen.