

# CHAPTER 4

We have gone through the former part of this epistle, which consists of several important doctrinal truths, contained in the three preceding chapters. We enter now on the latter part of it, in which we have the most weighty and serious exhortations that can be given. We may observe that in this, as in most others of Paul's epistles, the former part is doctrinal, and fitted to inform the minds of men in the great truths and doctrines of the gospel, the latter is practical, and designed for the direction of their lives and manners, all Christians being bound to endeavour after soundness in the faith, and regularity in life and practice. In what has gone before we have heard of Christian privileges, which are the matter of our comfort. In what follows we shall hear of Christian duties, and what the Lord our God requires of us in consideration of such privileges vouchsafed to us. The best way to understand the mysteries and partake of the privileges of which we have read before is conscientiously to practise the duties prescribed to us in what follows: as, on the other hand, a serious consideration and belief of the doctrines that have been taught us in the foregoing chapters will be a good foundation on which to build the practice of the duties prescribed in those which are yet before us. Christian faith and Christian practice mutually befriend each other. In this chapter we have divers exhortations to important duties.

- I.** One that is more general (v. 1).
- II.** An exhortation to mutual love, unity, and concord, with the proper means and motives to promote them (v. 2-16).
- III.** An exhortation to Christian purity and holiness of life; and that both more general (v. 17-24) and in several particular instances (v. 25 to the end).

## ◀◀◀EPHESIANS 4:1

### CONSISTENCY ENFORCED

This is a general exhortation to walk as becomes our Christian profession. Paul was now a prisoner at Rome; and he was the *prisoner of the Lord*, or in the Lord, which signifies as much as for the Lord. See of this, ◀◀◀Ephesians 3:1. He mentions this once and again, to show that he was not ashamed of his bonds, well knowing that he suffered not as an evil doer: and likewise to recommend what he wrote to them with the greater tenderness and with some special advantage. It was a doctrine he thought worth suffering for, and therefore surely they should think it worthy their serious regards and their dutiful observance. We have here the petition of a poor prisoner, one of Christ's prisoners: "*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you,*" etc. Considering what God has done for you, and to what a state and condition he has called you, as has been discoursed before, I now come with an earnest request to you (not to send me relief, nor to use your interest for the obtaining of my liberty, the first thing which poor prisoners are wont to solicit from their friends, but) that you would approve yourselves good Christians, and live up to your profession and calling; *That you walk worthily*, agreeably, suitably, and congruously to those happy circumstances into which the grace of God has brought you, whom he has converted from heathenism to Christianity. Observe, Christians ought to accommodate themselves to the gospel by which they are called, and to the glory to which they are called; both are their vocation. We are called Christians; we must answer that name, and live like Christians. We are called to God's kingdom and glory; that kingdom and glory therefore we must mind, and walk as becomes the heirs of them.

## ◀◀◀EPHESIANS 4:2-16

### PERSUASIVES TO UNITY

Here the apostle proceeds to more particular exhortations. Two he enlarges upon in this chapter: — To unity an love, purity and holiness, which Christians should very much study. We do not *walk worthy of the*

*vocation wherewith we are called* if we be not faithful friends to all Christians, and sworn enemies to all sin.

This section contains the exhortation to mutual love, unity, and concord, with the proper means and motives to promote them. Nothing is pressed upon us more earnestly in the scriptures than this. Love is the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, the livery of his family. Observe,

**I.** The means of unity: *Lowliness and meekness, long-suffering, and forbearing one another in love*, v. 2. By *lowliness* we are to understand humility, entertaining mean thoughts of ourselves, which is opposed to pride. By *meekness*, that excellent disposition of soul which makes men unwilling to provoke others, and not easily to be provoked or offended with their infirmities; and it is opposed to angry resentments and peevishness. *Long-suffering* implies a patient bearing of injuries, without seeking revenge. *Forbearing one another in love* signifies bearing their infirmities out of a principle of love, and so as not to cease to love them on the account of these. The best Christians have need to bear one with another, and to make the best one of another, to provoke one another's graces and not their passions. We find much in ourselves which it is hard to forgive ourselves; and therefore we must not think it much if we find that in others which we think hard to forgive them, and yet we must forgive them as we forgive ourselves. Now without these things unity cannot be preserved. The first step towards unity is humility; without this there will be no meekness, no patience, or forbearance; and without these no unity. Pride and passion break the peace, and make all the mischief. Humility and meekness restore the peace, and keep it. *Only by pride comes contention*; only by humility comes love. The more lowly-mindedness the more like-mindedness. We do not walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called if we be not meek and lowly of heart: for he by whom we are called, he to whom we are called, was eminent for meekness and lowliness of heart, and has commanded us therein to learn of him.

**II.** The nature of that unity which the apostle prescribes: it is *the unity of the Spirit*, v. 3. The seat of Christian unity is in the heart or spirit: it does not lie in one set of thoughts, nor in one form and mode of worship, but in one heart and one soul. This unity of heart and affection may be said to be of the Spirit of God; it is wrought by him, and is one of the fruits of the

Spirit. This we should endeavour to keep. *Endeavouring* is a gospel word. We must do our utmost. If others will quarrel with us, we must take all possible care not to quarrel with them. If others will despise and hate us, we must not despise and hate them. *In the bond of peace.* Peace is a bond, as it unites persons, and makes them live friendly one with another. A peaceable disposition and conduct bind Christians together, whereas discord and quarrelling disband and disunite their hearts and affections. Many slender twigs, bound together, become strong. The bond of peace is the strength of society. Not that it can be imagined that all good people, and all the members of societies, should be in every thing just of the same length, and the same sentiments, and the same judgment: but the bond of peace unites them all together, with a *non obstante* to these. As in a bundle of rods, they may be of different lengths and different strength; but, when they are tied together by one bond, they are stronger than any, even than the thickest and strongest was of itself.

**III.** The motives proper to promote this Christian unity and concord. The apostle urges several, to persuade us thereto.

**1.** Consider how many unities there are that are the joy and glory of our Christian profession. There should be one heart; for *there is one body, and one spirit*, v. 4. Two hearts in one body would be monstrous. If there be but one body, all that belong to that body should have one heart. The Catholic church is one mystical body of Christ, and all good Christians make up but one body, incorporated by one charter, that of the gospel, animated by one Spirit, the same Holy Spirit who by his gifts and graces quickens, enlivens, and governs that body. If we belong to Christ, we are all actuated by one and the same Spirit, and therefore should be one. *Even as you are called in one hope of your calling.* Hope is here put for its object, the thing hoped for, the heavenly inheritance, to the hope of which we are called. All Christians are called to the same hope of eternal life. There is one Christ that they all hope in, and one heaven that they are all hoping for; and therefore they should be of one heart. *One Lord* (v. 5), that is, Christ, the head of the church, to whom, by God's appointment, all Christians are immediately subject. *One faith*, that is, the gospel, containing the doctrine of the Christian faith: or, it is the same grace of faith (faith in Christ) whereby all Christians are saved. *One baptism*, by which we profess our faith, being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and so the same sacramental covenant, whereby we engage ourselves to the Lord Christ. *One God and Father of all*, v. 6. One

God, who owns all the true members of the church for his children; for he is the Father of all such by special relation, as he is the Father of all men by creation: and he *is above all*, by his essence, and with respect to the glorious perfections of his nature, and as he has dominion over all creatures and especially over his church, *and through all*, by his providence upholding and governing them: *and in you all*, in all believers, in whom he dwells as in his holy temple, by his Spirit and special grace. If then there be so many *ones*, it is a pity but there should be one more — one heart, or one soul.

**2.** Consider the variety of gifts that Christ has bestowed among Christians: *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* Though the members of Christ's church agree in so many things, yet there are some things wherein they differ: but this should breed no difference of affection among them, since they are all derived from the same bountiful author and designed for the same great ends. Unto every one of us Christians is given grace, some gift of grace, in some kind or degree or other, for the mutual help of one another. Unto every one of us ministers is given grace; to some a greater measure of gifts, to others a less measure. The different gifts of Christ's ministers proved a great occasion of contention among the first Christians: one was for Paul, and another for Apollos. The apostle shows that they had no reason to quarrel about them, but all the reason in the world to agree in the joint use of them, for common edification; because all was given *according to the measure of the gift of Christ*, in such a measure as seemed best to Christ to bestow upon every one. Observe, All the ministers, and all the members of Christ, owe all the gifts and graces that they are possessed of to him; and this is a good reason why we should love one another, *because to every one of us is given grace.* All to whom Christ has given grace, and on whom he has bestowed his gifts (though they are of different sizes, different names, and different sentiments, yet), *ought to love one another.* The apostle takes this occasion to specify some of the gifts which Christ bestowed. And that they were bestowed by Christ he makes appear by those words of David wherein he foretold this concerning him (~~the~~ Psalm 68:18), *Wherefore he saith* (v. 8), that is, the Psalmist saith, *When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.* David prophesied of the ascension of Christ; and the apostle descants upon it here, and in the three following verses. *When he ascended up on high.* We may understand the apostle both of the place into which he ascended in his human nature, that

is, the highest heavens, and particularly of the state to which he was advanced, he being then highly exalted, and eminently glorified, by his Father. Let us set ourselves to think of the ascension of Jesus Christ: that our blessed Redeemer, having risen from the dead, is gone to heaven, where he sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, which completed the proof of his being the Son of God. As great conquerors, when they rode in their triumphal chariots, used to be attended with the most illustrious of their captives led in chains, and were wont to scatter their largesses and bounty among the soldiers and other spectators of their triumphs, so Christ, when he ascended into heaven, as a triumphant conqueror, *led captivity captive*. It is a phrase used in the Old Testament to signify a conquest over enemies, especially over such as formerly had led others captive; see <sup><1082></sup>Judges 5:12. Captivity is here put for captives, and signifies all our spiritual enemies, who brought us into captivity before. He conquered those who had conquered us; such as sin, the devil, and death. Indeed, he triumphed over these *on the cross*; but the triumph was completed at his ascension, when he became Lord over all, and had the keys of death and hades put into his hands. *And he gave gifts unto men*: in the psalm it is, *He received gifts for men*. He received for them, that he might give to them, a large measure of gifts and graces; particularly, he enriched his disciples with the gift of the Holy Ghost. The apostle, thus speaking of the ascension of Christ, takes notice that he *descended first*, v. 9. As much as if he had said, “When David speaks of Christ's ascension, he intimates the knowledge he had of Christ's humiliation on earth; for, when it is said that he ascended, this implies that he first descended: for what is it but a proof or demonstration of his having done so?” *Into the lower parts of the earth*; this may refer either to his incarnation, according to that of David, <sup><1085></sup>Psalm 139:15, *My substance was not hidden from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth*; or, to his burial, according to that of <sup><1086></sup>Psalm 63:9, *Those that seek my soul to destroy it shall go into the lower parts of the earth*. He calls his death (say some of the fathers) *his descent into the lower parts of the earth*. He descended to the earth in his incarnation. He descended into the earth in his burial. *As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so was the Son of man in the heart of the earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens* (v. 10), far above the airy and starry (which are the visible) heavens, into the heaven of heavens; *that he might fill all things*, all the members of his church, with gifts and graces suitable to their several conditions and

stations. Observe, Our Lord humbled himself first, and then he was exalted. He descended first, and then ascended. The apostle next tells us what were Christ's gifts at his ascension: *He gave some apostles*, etc. etc., v. 11. Indeed he sent forth some of these before his ascension, <sup><411></sup>Matthew 10:1-5. But one was then added, <sup><412></sup>Acts 1:26. And all of them were more solemnly installed, and publicly confirmed, in their office, by his visibly pouring forth the Holy Ghost in an extraordinary manner and measure upon them. Note, The great gift that Christ gave to the church at his ascension was that of the ministry of peace and reconciliation. The gift of the ministry is the fruit of Christ's ascension. And ministers have their various gifts, which are all given them by the Lord Jesus. The officers which Christ gave to his church were of two sorts — *extraordinary* ones advanced to a higher office in the church: such were *apostles*, *prophets*, and *evangelists*. The apostles were chief. These Christ immediately called, furnished them with extraordinary gifts and the power of working miracles, and with infallibility in delivering his truth; and, they having been the witnesses of his miracles and doctrine, he sent them forth to spread the gospel and to plant and govern churches. The prophets seem to have been such as expounded the writings of the Old Testament, and foretold things to come. The evangelists were ordained persons (<sup><516></sup>2 Timothy 1:6), whom the apostles took for their companions in travel (<sup><411></sup>Galatians 2:1), and sent them out to settle and establish such churches as the apostles themselves had planted (<sup><412></sup>Acts 19:22), and, not being fixed to any particular place, they were to continue till recalled, <sup><509></sup>2 Timothy 4:9. And then there are *ordinary* ministers, employed in a lower and narrower sphere; as *pastors* and *teachers*. Some take these two names to signify one office, implying the duties of ruling and teaching belonging to it. Others think they design two distinct offices, both ordinary, and of standing use in the church; and then pastors are such as are fixed at the head of particular churches, with design to guide, instruct, and feed them in the manner appointed by Christ; and they are frequently called bishops and elders: and the teachers were those whose work it was also to preach the gospel and to instruct the people by way of exhortation. We see here that it is Christ's prerogative to appoint what officers and offices he pleases in his church. And how rich is the church, that had at first such a variety of officers and has still such a variety of gifts! How kind is Christ to his church! How careful of it and of its edification! When he ascended, he procured the gift of the Holy Ghost; and the gifts of the Holy Ghost are

various: some have greater, others have less measures; but all for the good of the body, which brings us to the third argument,

**3.** Which is taken from Christ's great end and design in giving gifts unto men. The gifts of Christ were intended for the good of his church, and in order to advance his kingdom and interest among men. All these being designed for one common end is a good reason why all Christians should agree in brotherly love, and not envy one another's gifts. All are *for the perfecting of the saints* (v. 12); that is, according to the import of the original, to bring into an orderly spiritual state and frame those who had been as it were dislocated and disjointed by sin, and then to strengthen, confirm, and advance them therein, that so each, in his proper place and function, might contribute to the good of the whole. — *For the work of the ministry, or for the work of dispensation*; that is, that they might dispense the doctrines of the gospel, and successfully discharge the several parts of their ministerial function. — *For the edifying of the body of Christ*; that is, to build up the church, which is Christ's mystical body, by an increase of their graces, and an addition of new members. All are designed to prepare us for heaven: *Till we all come*, etc., v. 13. The gifts and offices (some of them) which have been spoken of are to continue in the church till the saints be perfected, which will not be *till they all come in the unity of the faith* (till all true believers meet together, by means of the same precious faith) *and of the knowledge of the Son of God*, by which we are to understand, not a bare speculative knowledge, or the acknowledging of Christ to be the Son of God and the great Mediator, but such as is attended with appropriation and affection, with all due honour, trust, and obedience. — *Unto a perfect man*, to our full growth of gifts and graces, free from those childish infirmities that we are subject to in the present world. — *Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, so as to be Christians of a full maturity and ripeness in all the graces derived from Christ's fulness: or, according to the measure of that stature which is to make up the fulness of Christ, which is to complete his mystical body. Now we shall never come to the perfect man, till we come to the perfect world. There is a fulness in Christ, and a fulness to be derived from him; and a certain stature of that fulness, and a measure of that stature, are assigned in the counsel of God to every believer, and we never come to that measure till we come to heaven. God's children, as long as they are in this world, are growing. Dr Lightfoot understands the apostle as speaking here of Jews and Gentiles knit in the unity of the faith and of the



knowledge of the Son of God, so making a perfect man, and the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. The apostle further shows, in the following verses, what was God's design in his sacred institutions, and what effect they ought to have upon us. As,

**(1.)** *That we henceforth be no more children*, etc. (v. 14); that is, that we may be no longer children in knowledge, weak in the faith, and inconstant in our judgments, easily yielding to every temptation, readily complying with every one's humour, and being at every one's back. Children are easily imposed upon. We must take care of this, and of being *tossed to and fro*, like ships without ballast, *and carried about*, like clouds in the air, with such doctrines as have no truth nor solidity in them, but nevertheless spread themselves far and wide, and are therefore compared to wind. *By the sleight of men*; this is a metaphor taken from gamesters, and signifies the mischievous subtlety of seducers: *and cunning craftiness*, by which is meant their skilfulness in finding ways to seduce and deceive; for it follows, *whereby they lie in wait to deceive*, as in an ambush, in order to circumvent the weak, and draw them from the truth. Note, Those must be very wicked and ungodly men who set themselves to seduce and deceive others into false doctrines and errors. The apostle describes them here as base men, using a great deal of devilish art and cunning, in order thereunto. The best method we can take to fortify ourselves against such is to study the sacred oracles, and to pray for the illumination and grace of the Spirit of Christ, that we may know the truth as it is in Jesus, and be established in it.

**(2.)** That we should *speak the truth in love* (v. 15), or follow the truth in love, or be sincere in love to our fellow-christians. While we adhere to the doctrine of Christ, which is the truth, we should live in love one with another. Love is an excellent thing; but we must be careful to preserve truth together with it. Truth is an excellent thing; yet it is requisite that we speak it in love, and not in contention. These two should go together — truth and peace.

**(3.)** That we should *grow up into Christ in all things*. Into Christ, so as to be more deeply rooted in him. In all things; in knowledge, love, faith, and all the parts of the new man. We should grow up towards maturity, which is opposed to being children. Those are improving Christians who grow up into Christ. The more we grow into an acquaintance with Christ, faith in him, love to him, dependence upon him, the more we shall flourish in

every grace. He is the head; and we should thus grow, that we may thereby honour our head. The Christian's growth tends to the glory of Christ.

(4.) We should be assisting and helpful one to another, as members of the same body, v. 16. Here the apostle makes a comparison between the natural body and Christ's mystical body, that body of which Christ is the head: and he observes that as there must be communion and mutual communications of the members of the body among themselves, in order to their growth and improvement, so there must be mutual love and unity, together with the proper fruits of these, among Christians, in order to their spiritual improvement and growth in grace. *From whom*, says he (that is, from Christ their head, who conveys influence and nourishment to every particular member), *the whole body of Christians, fitly joined together and compacted* (being orderly and firmly united among themselves, every one in his proper place and station), *by that which every joint supplies* (by the assistance which every one of the parts, thus united, gives to the whole, or by the Spirit, faith, love, sacraments, etc., which, like the veins and arteries in the body, serve to unite Christians to Christ their head, and to one another as fellow-members), *according to the effectual working in the measure of every part* (that is, say some, according to the power which the Holy Ghost exerts to make God's appointed means effectual for this great end, in such a measure as Christ judges to be sufficient and proper for every member, according to its respective place and office in the body; or, as others, according to the power of Christ, who, as head, influences and enlivens every member; or, according to the effectual working of every member, in communicating to others of what it has received, nourishment is conveyed to all in their proportions, and according to the state and exigence of every part) *makes increase of the body*, such an increase as is convenient for the body. Observe, Particular Christians receive their gifts and graces from Christ for the sake and benefit of the whole body. *Unto the edifying of itself in love*. We may understand this two ways: — Either that all the members of the church may attain a greater measure of love to Christ and to one another; or that they are moved to act in the manner mentioned from love to Christ and to one another. Observe, Mutual love among Christians is a great friend to spiritual growth: it is in love that the body edifies itself; whereas *a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*.

## EPHESIANS 4:17-32

### EXHORTATION TO PURITY AND HOLINESS

The apostle having gone through his exhortation to mutual love, unity, and concord, in the foregoing verses, there follows in these an exhortation to Christian purity and holiness of heart and life, and that both more general (v. 17-24) and in several particular instances, v. 25-32. This is solemnly introduced: “*This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord; that is, seeing the matter is as above described, seeing you are members of Christ's body and partakers of such gifts, this I urge upon your consciences, and bear witness to as your duty in the Lord's name, and by virtue of the authority I have derived from him.*” Consider,

**I.** The more general exhortation to purity and holiness of heart and life.

**1.** It begins thus, “*That you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk* — that for the time to come you do not live, and behave yourselves, as ignorant and unconverted heathens do, who are wholly guided by an understanding employed about vain things, their idols and their worldly possessions, things which are no way profitable to their souls, and which will deceive their expectations.” Converted Gentiles must not live as unconverted Gentiles do. Though they live among them, they must not live like them. Here,

**(1.)** The apostle takes occasion to describe the wickedness of the Gentile world, out of which regenerate Christians were snatched as brands out of the burning.

**[1.]** Their *understandings were darkened*, v. 18. They were void of all saving knowledge; yea, ignorant of many things concerning God which the light of nature might have taught them. They sat in darkness, and they loved it rather than light: and by their ignorance they were *alienated from the life of God*. They were estranged from, and had a dislike and aversion to, a life of holiness, which is not only that way of life which God requires and approves, and by which we live to him, but which resembles God himself, in his purity, righteousness, truth, and goodness. Their wilful ignorance was the cause of their estrangement from this life of God, which begins in light and knowledge. Gross and affected ignorance is destructive to religion and godliness. And what was the cause of their being thus

ignorant? It was *because of the blindness* or the hardness of their heart. It was not because God did not make himself known to them by his works, but because they would not admit the instructive rays of the divine light. They were ignorant because they would be so. Their ignorance proceeded from their obstinacy and the hardness of their hearts, their resisting the light and rejecting all the means of illumination and knowledge.

[2.] Their consciences were debauched and seared: *Who being past feeling*, v. 19. They had no sense of their sin, nor of the misery and danger of their case by means of it; whereupon they *gave themselves over unto lasciviousness*. They indulged themselves in their filthy lusts; and, yielding themselves up to the dominion of these, they became the slaves and drudges of sin and the devil, *working all uncleanness with greediness*. They made it their common practice to commit all sorts of uncleanness, and even the most unnatural and monstrous sins, and that with insatiable desires. Observe, When men's consciences are once seared, there are no bounds to their sins. When they set their hearts upon the gratification of their lusts, what can be expected but the most abominable sensuality and lewdness, and that their horrid enormities will abound? This was the character of the Gentiles; but,

(2.) These Christians must distinguish themselves from such Gentiles: *You have not so learned Christ*, v. 20. It may be read, *But you not so; you have learned Christ*. Those who have learned Christ are saved from the darkness and defilement which others lie under; and, as they know more, they are obliged to live in a better manner than others. It is a good argument against sin that we have not so learned Christ. Learn Christ! Is Christ a book, a lesson, a way, a trade? The meaning is, “You have not so learned Christianity — the doctrines of Christ and the rules of life prescribed by him. Not so as to do as others do. *If so be*, or since, *that you have heard him* (v. 21), have heard his doctrine preached by us, *and have been taught by him*, inwardly and effectually, by his Spirit.” Christ is the lesson; we must learn Christ: and Christ is the teacher; we are taught by him. *As the truth is in Jesus*. This may be understood two ways: either, “You have been taught the real truth, as held forth by Christ himself, both in his doctrine and in his life.” Or thus, “The truth has made such an impression on your hearts, in your measure, as it did upon the heart of Jesus.” The truth of Christ then appears in its beauty and power, when it appears as in Jesus.

2. Another branch of the general exhortation follows in those words, *That you put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, etc.*, v. 22-24. "This is a great part of the doctrine which has been taught you, and which you have learned." Here the apostle expresses himself in metaphors taken from garments. The principles, habits, and dispositions of the soul must be changed, before there can be a saving change of the life. There must be sanctification, which consists of these two things: —

(1.) The old man must be put off. The corrupt nature is called a man, because, like the human body, it consists of divers parts, mutually supporting and strengthening one another. It is the old man, as old Adam, from whom we derive it. It is bred in the bone, and we brought it into the world with us. It is subtle as the old man; but in all God's saints decaying and withering as an old man, and ready to pass away. It is said to be corrupt; for sin in the soul is the corruption of its faculties: and, where it is not mortified, it grows daily worse and worse, and so tends to destruction. *According to the deceitful lusts.* Sinful inclinations and desires are deceitful lusts: they promise men happiness, but render them more miserable, and if not subdued and mortified betray them into destruction. These therefore must be put off as an old garment that we should be ashamed to be seen in: they must be subdued and mortified. These lusts prevailed against them in their *former conversation*, that is, during their state of unregeneracy and heathenism.

(2.) The new man must be put on. It is not enough to shake off corrupt principles, but we must be actuated by gracious ones. We must embrace them, espouse them, and get them written on our hearts: it is not enough to cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well. "*Be renewed in the spirit of your mind* (v. 23); that is, use the proper and prescribed means in order to have the mind, which is a spirit, renewed more and more." *And that you put on the new man*, v. 24. By the new man is meant the new nature, the new creature, which is actuated by a new principle, even regenerating grace, enabling a man to lead a new life, that life of righteousness and holiness which Christianity requires. This new man *is created*, or produced out of confusion and emptiness, by God's almighty power, whose workmanship it is, truly excellent and beautiful. *After God*, in imitation of him, and in conformity to that grand exemplar and pattern. The loss of God's image upon the soul was both the sinfulness and misery of man's fallen state; and that resemblance which it bears to God is the beauty, the glory, and the happiness, of the new creature. *In righteousness*

towards men, including all the duties of the second table; *and in holiness* towards God, signifying a sincere obedience to the commands of the first table; *true holiness* in opposition to the outward and ceremonial holiness of the Jews. We are said to put on this new man when, in the use of all God's appointed means, we are endeavouring after this divine nature, this new creature. This is the more general exhortation to purity and holiness of heart and life.

**II.** The apostle proceeds to some things more particular. Because generals are not so apt to affect, we are told what are those particular limbs of the old man that must be mortified, those filthy rags of the old nature that must be put off, and what are the peculiar ornaments of the new man wherewith we should adorn our Christian profession.

**1.** Take heed of lying, and be ever careful to speak the truth (v. 25): "*Wherefore*, since you have been so well instructed in your duty, and are under such obligations to discharge it, let it appear, in your future behaviour and conduct, that there is a great and real change wrought in you, particularly by *putting away lying*." Of this sin the heathen were very guilty, affirming that a profitable lie was better than a hurtful truth; and therefore the apostle exhorts them to cease from lying, from every thing that is contrary to truth. This is a part of the old man that must be put off; and that branch of the new man that must be put on in opposition to it is *speaking the truth* in all our converse with others. It is the character of God's people that they are *children who will not lie*, who dare not lie, who hate and abhor lying. All who have grace make conscience of speaking the truth, and would not tell a deliberate lie for the greatest gain and benefit to themselves. The reason here given for veracity is, *We are members one of another*. Truth is a debt we owe to one another; and, if we love one another, we shall not deceive nor lie one to another. We belong to the same society or body, which falsehood or lying tends to dissolve; and therefore we should avoid it, and speak truth. Observe, Lying is a very great sin, a peculiar violation of the obligations which Christians are under, and very injurious and hurtful to Christian society.

**2.** "Take heed of anger and ungoverned passions. *Be you angry, and sin not*," v. 26. This is borrowed from the Septuagint translation of ~~1000~~ Psalm 4:4, where we render it, *Stand in awe, and sin not*. Here is an easy concession; for as such we should consider it, rather than as a command. *Be you angry*. This we are apt enough to be, God knows: but we find it

difficult enough to observe the restriction, *and sin not*. “If you have a just occasion to be angry at any time, see that it be without sin; and therefore take heed of excess in your anger.” If we would be angry and not sin (says one), we must be angry at nothing but sin; and we should be more jealous for the glory of God than for any interest or reputation of our own. One great and common sin in anger is to suffer it to burn into wrath, and then to let it rest; and therefore we are here cautioned against that. “If you have been provoked and have had your spirits greatly discomposed, and if you have bitterly resented any affront that has been offered, before night calm and quiet your spirits, be reconciled to the offender, and let all be well again: *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath*. If it burn into wrath and bitterness of spirit, O see to it that you suppress it speedily.” Observe, Though anger in itself is not sinful, yet there is the upmost danger of its becoming so if it be not carefully watched and speedily suppressed. And therefore, though anger may come into the bosom of a wise man, *it rests only in the bosom of fools*. *Neither give place to the devil*, v. 27. Those who persevere in sinful anger and in wrath let the devil into their hearts, and suffer him to gain upon them, till he bring them to malice, mischievous machinations, etc. “*Neither give place to the calumniator, or the false accuser*” (so some read the words); that is, “let your ears be deaf to whisperers, talebearers, and slanderers.”

**3.** We are here warned against the sin of stealing, the breach of the eighth commandment, and advised to honest industry and to beneficence: *Let him that stole steal no more*, v. 28. It is a caution against all manner of wrongdoing, by force or fraud. “Let those of you who, in the time of your gentilism, have been guilty of this enormity, be no longer guilty of it.” But we must not only take heed of the sin, but conscientiously abound in the opposite duty: not only not steal, *but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good*. Idleness makes thieves. So Chrysostom, *To gar kleptein argias estin* — *Stealing is the effect of idleness*. Those who will not work, and who are ashamed to beg, expose themselves greatly to temptations to thievery. Men should therefore be diligent and industrious, not in any unlawful way, but in some honest calling: *Working the thing which is good*. Industry, in some honest way, will keep people out of temptation of doing wrong. But there is another reason why men ought to be industrious, namely, that they may be capable of doing some good, as well as that they may be preserved from temptation: *That he may have to give to him that needeth*. They must labour not only that they may

live themselves, and live honestly, but they may distribute for supplying the wants of others. Observe, Even those who get their living by their labour should be charitable out of their little to those who are disabled for labour. So necessary and incumbent a duty is it to be charitable to the poor that even labourers and servants, and those who have but little for themselves, must cast their mite into the treasury. God must have his dues and the poor are his receivers. Observe further, Those alms that are likely to be acceptable to God must not be the produce of unrighteousness and robbery, but of honesty and industry. *God hates robbery for burnt-offerings.*

**4.** We are here warned against corrupt communication; and directed to that which is useful and edifying, v. 29. Filthy and unclean words and discourse are poisonous and infectious, as putrid rotten meat: they proceed from and prove a great deal of corruption in the heart of the speaker, and tend to corrupt the minds and manners of others who hear them; and therefore Christians should beware of all such discourse. It may be taken in general for all that which provokes the lusts and passions of others. We must not only put off corrupt communications, but *put on that which is good to the use of edifying.* The great use of speech is to edify those with whom we converse. Christians should endeavour to promote a useful conversation: *that it may minister grace unto the hearers;* that it may be good for, and acceptable to, the hearers, in the way of information, counsel, pertinent reproof, or the like. Observe, It is the great duty of Christians to take care that they offend not with their lips, and that they improve discourse and converse, as much as may be, for the good of others.

**5.** Here is another caution against wrath and anger, with further advice to mutual love and kindly dispositions towards each other, v. 31, 32. By *bitterness, wrath, and anger,* are meant violent inward resentment and displeasure against others: and, by *clamour,* big words, loud threatenings, and other intemperate speeches, by which bitterness, wrath, and anger, vent themselves. Christians should not entertain these vile passions in their hearts not be clamorous with their tongues. *Evil speaking* signifies all railing, reviling, and reproachful speeches, against such as we are angry with. And by *malice* we are to understand that rooted anger which prompts men to design and to do mischief to others. The contrary to all this follows: *Be you kind one to another.* This implies the principle of love in the heart, and the outward expressions of it, in an affable, humble,



courteous behaviour. It becomes the disciples of Jesus to be kind one to another, as those who have learned, and would teach, the art of obliging. *Tender-hearted*; that is, merciful, and having tender sense of the distresses and sufferings of others, so as to be quickly moved to compassion and pity. *Forgiving one another*. Occasions of difference will happen among Christ's disciples; and therefore they must be placable, and ready to forgive, therein resembling God himself, who *for Christ's sake hath forgiven them*, and that more than they can forgive one another. Note, With God there is forgiveness; and he forgives sin for the sake of Jesus Christ, and on account of that atonement which he has made to divine justice. Note again, Those who are forgiven of God should be of a forgiving spirit, and should forgive even as God forgives, sincerely and heartily, readily and cheerfully, universally and for ever, upon the sinner's sincere repentance, as remembering that they pray, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us*. Now we may observe concerning all these particulars that the apostle has insisted on that they belong to the second table, whence Christians should learn the strict obligations they are under to the duties of the second table, and that he who does not conscientiously discharge them can never fear nor love God in truth and in sincerity, whatever he may pretend to.

In the midst of these exhortations and cautions the apostle interposes that general one, *And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God*, v. 30. By looking to what precedes, and to what follows, we may see what it is that grieves the Spirit of God. In the previous verses it is intimated that all lewdness and filthiness, lying, and corrupt communications that stir up filthy appetites and lusts, grieve the Spirit of God. In what follows it is intimated that those corrupt passions of bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, and malice, grieve this good Spirit. By this we are not to understand that this blessed Being could properly be grieved or vexed as we are; but the design of the exhortation is that we act not towards him in such a manner as is wont to be grievous and disquieting to our fellow-creatures: we must not do that which is contrary to his holy nature and his will; we must not refuse to hearken to his counsels, nor rebel against his government, which things would provoke him to act towards us as men are wont to do towards those with whom they are displeased and grieved, withdrawing themselves and their wonted kindness from such, and abandoning them to their enemies. O provoke not the blessed Spirit of God to withdraw his presence and his gracious influences from you! It is a

good reason why we should not grieve him that *by him we are sealed unto the day of redemption*. There is to be a day of redemption; the body is to be redeemed from the power of the grave at the resurrection-day, and then God's people will be delivered from all the effects of sin, as well as from all sin and misery, which they are not till rescued out of the grave: and then their full and complete happiness commences. All true believers are sealed to that day. God has distinguished them from others, having set his mark upon them; and he gives them the earnest and assurance of a joyful and glorious resurrection; and the Spirit of God is the seal. Wherever that blessed Spirit is as a sanctifier, he is the earnest of all the joys and glories of the redemption-day; and we should be undone should God take away his Holy Spirit from us.