

EPHESIANS 4:1-32

SUNDAY 26th OCTOBER 2025 | SIM FORDER

Ephesians 4:1-32

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 26th October 2025 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Psalm 119:9-16

Introduction

What a chapter we have before us this morning! I mean, there is not one chapter in the Bible that God didn't intend for us to read and learn from. But there is so much in this chapter. Of course, we could take it very slowly — we could easily spend 4 weeks looking at this. But at least this time through it, I'm going to move through the chapter at a reasonable pace (especially as we get to the second half of this chapter) because I think it is also helpful for us to understand the context of all these things that we read together.

Overview of chapter four

- **v1-6** — Walk worthy, pursue unity
- **v7-16** — The work of ministry
- **v17-24** — The changed heart
- **v25-32** — A life that pleases God

For we're going to see that Paul continues to write to the Ephesians in light of what he has *already* written about our their (and our) position in Christ, that we should *all* walk worthy of all that God has done for us, and pursue *unity* in Christ. But then he'll further explain, how God has called certain men to certain roles, not that they would be the ones who exclusively do the work of ministry, but that they might equip *all* the saints — that's all of *us* — *for* the work of ministry. That every part would do its share, that *each one of us* would play our part in the body of Christ. That's what the first half of this chapter will look at.

And then as we get to verse 17 and beyond, even into the final chapters of this letter, Paul will write about what Christian maturity looks like. How there should be a change of heart. A putting off of the old man, the old life — and a putting on of the new man, our new life in Christ. That is what he will write to these believers, and, if you *are* a Christian, to you too.

Therefore it's important to note this morning, if you are *not* a Christian, if you have not yet repented of your sin and put your faith in Jesus to save you, then this is not written to you. Indeed, much harm can be done by thinking that God wants you to clean up your act, so you can then come to Him — but that is not the way it works. Rather, God has done all necessary to pay for all of your sin. So first, you need to come to Him as your Saviour. Only then, out of gratitude to Him, and critically, with His Holy Spirit living within you, will you be changed by passages of the Bible such as this.

And so, to those of us who are Christians then, this is an important passage to study, to be familiar with, to understand, and to apply, as Paul talks about the inner man, who last week we read he was praying for in the lives of these believers. Knowing that our spiritual needs are far greater than our physical needs, as we considered last week.

Chapter four

And he will start by saying *therefore*. That is, what he says here follows what he has previously written. That before telling us how we are to walk, he has told us of where we sit *in Christ*. That we have been redeemed by His blood, forgiven of our sin, sealed by His Spirit, with an inheritance that is in Christ, made alive, brought near to God (and to each other), having peace with God, all as a result of His grace. Not a result of our works.

And as such, our Christian walk from this point on is not to earn God's favour or merit, but in response to His mercy and grace that He has so wonderfully shown to us. Grace that is so wonderful that once again Paul, writing this from prison in Rome, doesn't consider himself a prisoner of man, but of the Lord. That, in a sense, he is shackled to God — but in a good way. With his whole identity now found in Christ.

And so we read...

Ephesians 4:1-3

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 long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

That is, in light of all he has written in the first half of this letter, Paul now pleads with us, with a sense of urgency, to walk worthy of the calling with which we have been called.

So what is that calling? It is that call of God to respond to the offer of Salvation He has put before us. That call to freely accept what He has freely offered to us. And Paul pleads with us here, to walk worthy of this gospel of grace. That we wouldn't treat it as some trivial thing that God has done for us, but that we would respond to it as it is in fact, the greatest thing anyone could ever do for us.

That not only our actions, but our thoughts would be quite different as a result of the grace which we have received from God. That we would live in a way that not only pleases Him, but is a witness to all around us of what God has done for us. That our hearts might echo Charles Spurgeon's sentiment, when he said:

I cannot trifle with the evil that killed my best Friend. I must be holy for his sake. How can I live in sin when He has died to save me from it?

Charles Spurgeon

May we have that same heart! But, what does that look like? Well, Paul, writing here, gives us some specifics, saying first that we should respond with all **lowliness**. That is, we should be filled with humility, not pride. For we were not saved by our own efforts, after all. And that humility, as Paul would later write to Timothy, should extend to when we are correcting others on scriptural matters too. For we should not be trying to enforce our opinion, but rather explain what scripture says, to which we are all accountable.

And Paul continues, saying we should also show **gentleness** — to each other, and all those around us. Which is fruit of the Spirit of course. But the word for gentleness, translated in meekness in the KJV, should not be confused with meekness. For Jesus was gentle, He was meek, but He wasn't weak. Indeed, we saw Him drive the money-changers out of the temple. And Moses, who was also described as meek, threw down the tablets of stone when he saw Israel worshipping the golden calf. So rather, what Paul is getting at here, is we shouldn't be those that generate strife, that have harsh words to say about one another. Serious words, yes. Firm exhortations, if needed. But we shouldn't be rough with one another. We shouldn't be prickly, or difficult to be around.

Yet at the same time, we should be **long-suffering**, we should have extreme patience with one another, and one another's faults, for God has shown incredible patience with us. And we must bear with one another in love, not thinking we're better than others, or that we have no need of others — for we are all part of one body, that as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians "...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.'"

We need each other. And as such, Paul underlines all this saying that we are to endeavour to keep the **unity** of the *Spirit*. Not merely *union*. But *unity*. And the most vivid illustration I've heard of this is that if you tie the tails of two cats together and dangle them over a washing line, you have union — but you don't have unity (please don't try that at home!). What we are to be pursuing is that which should unite us, not begrudgingly, but wonderfully. And that is the unity that the Holy Spirit brings as we build our lives on God and His Word. And nothing else.

You see, unity must be founded on the Word of God, the Bible, not the opinion of man. As such, we must recognise that where there are those that move away from God and His Word, *they*, and not *us* are the ones that are being divisive, for failing to hold fast to that which has been given to us to build our lives upon. And as such, we must stand firm, *endeavouring* to keep unity of the *Spirit*, not a union of compromise — which is what Jude wrote about in his letter, saying:

Jude 1:3-4

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

And you know, this contending for the faith, this pursuit of unity based on God's Word is something we must *all* endeavour to play our part in. For problems are rife in the church at large today, with people speaking and teaching things contrary to scripture, compromising here, compromising there. We all have to be those that contend for the faith. That stand on the truth, and for the truth.

But lest we think this is a new phenomenon, that somehow all hope is lost, just consider the problems that the early church faced. Even before the end of the book of Acts we see Ananias and Sapphira lying to the Holy Spirit, Simon the sorcerer wanting to buy the Holy Spirit so he could profit financially, the Greek widows being neglected, and those in the church saying you must be circumcised in order to be saved.

Then, in the church in Corinth there were contentions among them (some saying I'm of Paul, or I'm of Apollos, when in fact they were all of Christ). And there was envy, strife and divisions among them. Some were puffed up at Paul not visiting, while others questioned their financial support for Paul. Some were taking each other to court, one man was sleeping with his stepmother and the church had failed to address it, while others had turned communion into a feast and were getting drunk. And besides that there was disorder in church services that Paul had to address too.

The Galatians, on the other hand, had started to turn away from the gospel of grace to salvation by works, they were observing days and months and seasons and years, and were also letting sin creep into their lives. While the Thessalonian church was dealing with letters written to them by people pretending to be Paul, telling them the rapture had already happened.

In writing to Timothy, Paul warned of people like Hymenaeus, Alexander and Philetus, who he noted had strayed concerning the truth, saying the resurrection was already past. And he wrote of people like Demas who had forsaken the ministry, having loved this present world. John, in his third letter, warned of Diotrephes, a man who was puffed up and wanted to be the preeminent person in the church, even trying to turn John and others away from it. And Jude, as mentioned, warned of those who had crept in unnoticed, who were grumblers and complainers, who walked according to their own lusts; and flattered people to gain advantage.

And that's to say little of the warnings of Jesus in His letters to the churches in Revelation chapters 2 & 3, who had forgotten their first love for Him, and who had tolerated those in the church who committed idolatry, who committed sexual immorality, and wanted to be above others in the church.

So what, then, is the response to all this? Well, Paul told Timothy to *Preach the Word!* and to *hold fast* to the words he had heard. Jude warned us to *contend for the faith*. While Paul warned the Thessalonians to *hold fast*, and to *test all things*. And of course, Luke held up the Bereans as an example, noting how they *searched the scriptures daily* to see if what they heard was true.

Therefore, since the unity of the Spirit can only come about by God's Word working in our hearts, then it stands to reason that it is to God's Word that we must continue to turn. Not as if it were cake for special occasions, but as our daily bread. That we may all come to the unity of the faith, which Paul will continue to talk about in this chapter. For, we read:

Ephesians 4:4-6

There is one body 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.

There are not many ways to God, there is only one way. There is only one name under heaven by which we must be saved. And that is Jesus Christ. And this is what our unity is based on. On there being one way, and one single view of scripture; that it is the inspired, inerrant (that is, error-free) Word of God.

And specifically here Paul says there is one body; there is one church — made up of every believer from the apostles to the last person who will ever be saved. And there is one Spirit — the Holy Spirit, who brings believers into the body of Christ and unites them there. Likewise there is one hope, which is the blessed hope we all have as believers, of Jesus' return and one day standing in God's presence.

And there is only one Lord, only one Saviour who died for us. And only one baptism, referring to the baptism of the Spirit, who brings us into that wonderful relationship with the one true God — who Paul describes here as being above all (that is, He is not dependant on His creation), but also working through all for His purpose and glory, and in you all; living in each person who comes to Him in repentance and faith. That as His body, we might function as we ought to...

Each part doing what God has specifically enabled it to, eyes not jealous of feet. Feet not jealous of hands. Hands not jealous of ears. But each part acting as God created it to do, for we read on:

Ephesians 4:7

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

That is, the starting point is God's grace. And because of God's grace, and through God's Word, we have unity of the Spirit. But in unity there is also diversity. For as Paul wrote to the Corinthians; *"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?"* Here, continuing:

Ephesians 4:8

Therefore He says: *"When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."*

That is, as Jesus ascended, He not only led captivity captive (which by the way is singular, not plural, so not captives — but rather hell, death and the grave itself), but at that time he also gave gifts to men. Not only the Holy Spirit that would follow at Pentecost (that produces the fruit of the Spirit), but also the *gifts* of the Spirit that He might enable His church to fulfil the purpose which He has called it to. Which we'll come back to in a moment.

But first we read two bracketed verses, in which Paul says:

Ephesians 4:9-10

(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 we need to be careful not to get weird doctrine out of this. For some suggest that Jesus, after He died on the cross, went and suffered in hell for three days and nights. But that ignores that Jesus declared on the cross *"It is finished!"* meaning *paid in full*. And we can't twist what we read in Matthew's gospel account — that Jesus said *"as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."* to mean hell, for it obviously points to the tomb in which he was laid.

Rather, Paul is saying that it this Jesus' who was God incarnate (in that He descended in the sense that He put on skin and He walked among us) that so greatly humbled Himself, descending from Heaven to Earth, that is also this one who has ascended and given us gifts that *His* purpose may be accomplished through and in His body, the church. Going on to say:

Ephesians 4:11

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

Which, by the way are all masculine terms in the Greek. Which I point out because increasingly, as we're seeing in the Church of England, but also in other churches in our own town, it is becoming common place to appoint women into such roles, when the Bible knows nothing of that. And sadly, at the same time, to be frank, there are too many Christian men who fail to take on their spiritual responsibility in their own homes, let alone to step up as godly men ought to in their local church.

However, God *has* given *some* faithful men, not all men, but *some* the responsibility and gifting to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, or pastor-teachers, with a specific purpose in mind, which is to equip the saints, which we'll get to more in a moment. Not that they would be some sort of super Christians, or a spiritual elite, but that some Godly men would be called to serve in these specific ways, to enable others to serve in *other* ways.

And, specifically, the **apostles** were those that were eyewitnesses of Jesus from His baptism to His resurrection. They had to have seen the living risen Christ. And the Bible tells us there were signs accompanying an Apostle, that there was a miraculous ministry they had. And the purpose of God calling these men as Apostles, was in some cases to write scripture, and in all cases to lay the foundation that we would build upon, with Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone, as Paul wrote in chapter 2. Such men were those that Paul met with in Acts 15 in Jerusalem.

Then, there were and are the **prophets**, and in particular New Testament prophets since this is speaking of what would follow Jesus' ascension. And we have examples in the Bible such as Agabus, John, Peter, even Paul himself who did speak of things to come. But rather than these prophet's main ministry being foretelling, revealing what was to come, their ministry was to forthtell, to proclaim what God has done, and what He is going to do — that, as we read in Revelation 19, *"the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."* And one modern example I've heard suggested is people such as Billy Graham, who have preached the gospel, and spoken of Jesus before multitudes, as well as in private before world leaders of many nations.

Next, God gave some to be **evangelists**. And we see folks such as Philip in early church who preached the gospel and led people to Christ. Paul too, led many to the Lord. And indeed, we are all to evangelise, to fulfil the great commission, to share the gospel that others may be saved — for we do so out of love. Yet this is also a specific calling, where God lays it on someone's heart to make this their life's work and purpose — Ray Comfort is a great example of such a man, who not only preaches the gospel, but equips the church in such a way as to help each one of us share the gospel. Then, closer to home, I have a friend in Wales who just has a heart to share the gospel with everyone he can. And will find any way he can to do so. And has led many to Christ.

And finally, we read God gave some to be **pastors and teachers**. And note, those are one and the same role — not distinct roles as the pentecostal movement has often taught. You see, even in the English we can see that it doesn't say *some* pastors, and *some* teachers — but rather, pastors *and* teachers. And in case you're wondering if this is just me splitting hairs, this is an accurate reflection of the Greek, in which the word *some* is the definite article, which is missing from before the word for *teachers*. And in Greek we have what is known as the Granville Sharp rule, that says where you have two nouns joined by a single connecting word — such as *and* — and only the first noun has the definite article, such as *the*, or in this case *some*, then both nouns refer to the same person or entity. Which is a principle of semantics that holds true in all languages.

But frankly, with or without *any* understanding of Greek, this makes sense. For what good is it for a man to shepherd, to protect the sheep, if he doesn't care if they are fed?! And what good is it if he feeds them, but doesn't care about their safety?! You see, both are necessary. But sadly today, the teaching of the Word of God is worryingly neglected by those in the pulpit, and specifically by those who are called to watch over the flock, to watch out for their souls, as those who must give account (as we read in Hebrews). The primary responsibility of the pastor is to feed the sheep. It is not to burp babies, to do house visits, to meet with local dignitaries, to be a brilliant strategist, or entertainer, or worship leader, or building renovator, or wedding planner.

To give some further clarity to this, let me read to you from William Still's excellent book *The work of the pastor* which I highly, highly recommend to each one of you, whether you are called to that ministry or not. He says there:

The pastor is called to feed the sheep, even if the sheep do not want to be fed. He is certainly not to become an entertainer of goats. Let goats entertain goats, and let them do it out in goatland. You will certainly not turn goats into sheep by pandering to their goatishness.

William Still

And he is resolute in reminding his readers that this a serious business, necessitating the teaching of the whole Bible, writing:

To keep dipping away into our own pet subjects and giving folk what we like best, or they like best, is not the way to feed the flock. No schoolteacher would get away for long with that cavalier attitude to the curriculum. If we are called at all, it is to the ministry of the whole Word of God. Why, the New Testament itself drives us back to the Old, and the various divisions of each Testament drive us to the others, to supplement and complement our knowledge.

William Still

Pastors much teach the Bible. They must teach all of it. And they must teach it faithfully. Anything less is to miss the standard required by God and his Word.

But this isn't without purpose, nor indeed are any of these callings without purpose — for we *read* that God gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers...

Ephesians 4:12

for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

You see, the idea of these gifts is that they are to equip the saints — that is all Christians, including each one of us here this morning — for the work of ministry, every part doing its share. For if you enter *any* kind of ministry and you are ignorant of what the apostles wrote and did, if you have no understanding of what God has done or will yet do, if you have no heart for the lost to be saved, and if you have no understanding of how the Bible says you should live, then you are not equipped to do that work (whether that is leading worship, showing hospitality, leading a small group, raising your children, leading a kids club, caring for the bereaved, or whatever God calls you to do).

That's not to say you should know all there is to know about the Bible before you lift a finger in service to God, but it *is* saying that the purpose of these gifts is to prepare, equip and even propel each one of us to serve. Indeed, it's perhaps an unhelpful term we often use, to call the pastor of a church a minister, because as Christians we are all to minister as much as one another.

J Vernon McGee, speaking more than 50 years ago, was exceptionally direct on this point. He said:

I am going to talk to you very frankly. Don't expect your pastor to do it all. He is there to train you that you might do the work of the ministry and that the church might become mature. We are not to act like a bunch of nitwits today. We are to give a good, clear-cut, intelligent witness to the world. I think the greatest sin in the local church today is the ignorance of the man sitting in the pew; he doesn't know the Word of God, and that is a tragedy. I would hate to get into an airplane if the pilot didn't know any more about flying than the average church member knows about Christianity and the Word of God. The plane wouldn't make it—I think it would crash before it got ten feet into the air. That is the condition of the church today. All believers need to be trained in the Word of God so they can do the work of the ministry.

J Vernon McGee

Now, I'm not saying you are all ignorant of God's Word! He is speaking generally of the church at large, of course. But sadly this is probably true in some cases in all churches... so what of you? Have you given any thought to the notion that what you hear on a Sunday morning or evening, isn't merely for your own personal growth in the Lord, but that you might serve Him, and, serve each other?

For Paul continues, having said that these gifts are for the equipping of *all* Christians to do the *work* of ministry, by giving us the *purpose* of that ministry, writing:

Ephesians 4:13-16

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.

That is, he's saying that these gifts God has given to some, are given so that we might *all* be equipped to serve, the purpose of such service being that we might all come to maturity in Christ, and no be longer babies (spiritually speaking), unable to tell the difference between what will do us good and what will do us harm, but rather, not only able to feed ourselves, we would be able to help one another, each part doing its share, that we might grow in depth, and breadth, showing the love of Christ to one another that we may continually be encouraged in Him.

Or another way of putting it, is that these gifts given to some should result in *all* the saints being equipped for ministry, not merely as reserves, but actually in the battle, that the whole church would be edified, that we may all come to the unity of the faith, that we may know Jesus (not just know *about* Him), that we may aim for perfection in the inner man (with Christ as our example), that we would not be immature, that we would be wise to the deceptions of those who would lead us astray, that we would be rooted and grounded in the faith (not as tumbleweed without direction), that we may both speak the truth and do so in love, that we may grow up (that we might be mature Christians, growing in Christ), that we would stick together, everyone contributing to that (and not division), every part doing it's share (that no-one be overwhelmed), that we might all grow in our walk with Christ as we love and encourage one another.

That is the picture of the church that Paul is painting. And it is remarkably different from a place where people are merely entertained.

Jon Courson, commenting on this, put it this way. He said; *The church of Jesus Christ exists for three reasons:*

- *To exalt God—which is why we sing praises and offer prayer*
- *To edify His people—which is why we study the Word*
- *To evangelize the unsaved—which is why we preach salvation*

And he continues, saying:

Contrary to what many think, the church does not exist primarily to evangelize. It exists to build the saints so that they, in turn, will do the work of the ministry. If you come from a church background, the tendency is to think that Christian service happens primarily at church. In reality, however, the most effective ministry happens when you're on the job site, at school, with your buddies, working out, or eating a burger. In the Book of Acts, we see the early church hearing the apostles teach, breaking bread together—and then going out to turn the world upside down.

Jon Courson

Now, since God has provided these things to lead us all to a place of maturity, Paul writes:

Ephesians 4:17-19

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.

That is, we should no longer walk as we used to, for that old way was futile, separated from God, ignorant of Him and all He has done. And those folks who still do so have become so desensitised to the world around them, that they are continually crude and offensive, and are never satisfied with what they have. And that should not be us any more, for while there is a liberty, a freedom in Christ, it is not a license to sin. And he continues, saying:

Ephesians 4:20-24

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.

That is, if we have been taught in His Word, if we have understood what He has done and what He has said to us, then we know that isn't how we should walk. Rather, there is a putting off of the old man, and a putting on of the new man — which isn't passive, but something we must intentionally and actively do. In the same way that we would take off dirty clothes, and put on fresh ones.

For consider this, having had a shower, would you then go and put on dirty clothes again? Well, neither *should* we, having been made clean by the blood of Christ, *choose* to put on our filthy rags of sin again. Instead, we should choose to do that which pleases and honours Him. That we might, as we *read* at the start of this chapter, *walk worthy of the calling with which we were called*.

And that has implications. Which Paul now ends this chapter with, but will extend through to the final chapter of this letter. And he writes first about our conduct toward one another in the church, saying in verse 25:

Ephesians 4:25

Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour," for we are members of one another.

Quoting from Zechariah 8:16, the implication here is that if we do this, we hurt both others *and* ourselves in the process. Like if the foot lies to the eye about whether the ground under foot is safe to walk on. Of if the eye lies to the feet about whether there is something worth running away from. It is necessary for the whole body, that the whole body deal truthfully with itself. That the church not fight against itself. That it would in fact deal with itself correctly, Paul noting:

Ephesians 4:26-27

"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.

That is, there is a time and place to be angry. That there *are* things that we should be angry with. Just as Jesus was angry with the Pharisees, on occasion. But we are not to sin as a result, and we are not to bear grudges, bearing ill will toward others, for doing so allows the devil to get a foothold in our lives, and in our church. For he would love to cause infighting, where bickering, complaining, backbiting and so on are common place. So don't let matters fester like an open wound.

Furthermore, we read:

Ephesians 4:28

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.

Again, there should be this about turn in our character from how we used to be! And rather than acting selfishly, we are now to act selflessly, looking out for others, preferring others to ourselves, even going as far as our pursuit of our paycheck being with others in mind.

And there are multiple parts to this; that we would look out for the poor and needy as individuals, and I know there are those of you that have done just that to help others in their time of need, but also that we would do so as a church, and I know this church has done that too when there have been those who have lost jobs and have struggled to feed their family.

But J Vernon McGee goes even further, saying *"The believer is not to get rich for his own selfish ends. Rather, he is to help others with whatever he has that is surplus. Today there are many fine Christian ministries that lag and wilt for lack of funds. Why? Because many believers are accumulating riches for themselves and are not giving as they should give."*

And that's challenging, right? But, returning to our tongues, Paul writes in verse 29:

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

That is, nothing rotten or putrid should come out of our mouths. Indeed, we shouldn't be telling dirty jokes, using innuendo, or swearing. But rather, we should be saying, as David did in Psalm 19:

Psalm 19:14

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

That far from speaking like those who are of the kingdom of this world, we would speak in such a way that it builds each other up, rather than tears each other down. That we might encourage each other toward Christ, rather than draw others away from Him. That our behaviour would please God:

Ephesians 4:30

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Which is that we should do none of these things listed that that Paul has warned us against. For when we lie, or selfishly keep what God has given us, or speak with a filthy tongue, we grieve the Holy Sprit of God, and it damages our relationship with Him. David even noting in Psalm 66 that *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear."* That is, our sin can damage our walk with God to the extent that He won't hear our prayers.

And so Paul continues, noting sins of an emotional nature, but also the emotional responses that God wants us to have. Saying:

Ephesians 4:31

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

That is, we are not merely to let go, but to choose to put aside any bitterness we have toward anyone, laying down our desires to get even, or to make a protest of any sort, not even speaking a wrong word about others, or harbouring any ill intent toward anyone. But on the contrary, we read:

Ephesians 4:32

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

And note, none of that has any dependency on how the *other* person acts. Rather, we are simply to be kind and tenderly compassionate toward others, forgiving them of anything they have done toward us, because we know how much God has forgiven us for that we did against Him.

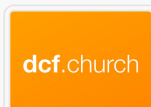
And in writing this, Paul brings us full circle back to the start of this chapter, that we might worthy of the calling with which we have been called. That we might act in light of and in response to the glorious gospel of Christ, knowing that He has paid for all our sin and has saved us by grace. Forgiving the inexcusable in each other, for God has forgiven the inexcusable in us.

Application questions

Now, we'll continue our study of this letter next week. But today, let me give you a few questions to consider or discuss over the dinner table.

- Are you walking worthy of what Christ has done for you?
- What are you doing to keep the unity of the Spirit in this church?
- What is the work of ministry that God has called *you* to?
- Have you put off the old man and his lusts, and put on the new man?

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