

## PUTTING AWAY THE OLD WAY

Sermon by Pastor Scott Lowther

Ephesians 4:25-32

August 28, 2011

What we are going to talk about today I call it "Putting Away the Old Way". Two weeks ago we talked about how the Lord was exhorting us to put off the old man that was chapter 4, verses 22-23. We are to put on the new man, that's verse 24. And today we are going to talk about putting away things. If you weren't here, 2 to 3 weeks ago, you're not going to understand this if you don't take some very basic things into consideration.

First of all, what the Lord has for us in terms of obeying him, is something that he works in his people. If you think that it's all about your own effort, if you think it's about something you must do, must simply try harder to put away these bad behaviors, then that's not going to work very well for you. You have to understand that any of our obedience that we have, anything good that comes from our life is God working in us. Anything good is God working in us. The same is with our changing. We don't change ourselves, we cannot change ourselves. It's the Lord that changes us.

If you have been with us in the study of Ephesians, there are 3 chapters of doctrine. It's the doctrine that gives us what we know. "As a man thinks so he is", scripture says. It's important you know. Not what you feel, not how you view things. It's important what you know. Before Paul talks about our behavior he talks about what we should know.

So let's get to our text.

***Ephesians 4:25-32: "25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."***

Now most of us try not to think about our failures any more than we have to. Right? Anytime we fall short, we try not to focus on that. As a matter of fact, if you live your life focusing on the failures of your past, you're never going to go forward. Scripture emphatically cautions us not to live in the past and not to focus on the past in terms of what we use to be. On the other hand, there are great things to be learned about the way God delivered us from certain things in our past so that we shouldn't forget

his work. We should forget and put aside the things that we use to be. We should press on to what we are called to be. I think most often what happens, is people who are Christians, they hit text that we are going to talk about today, and they become so discouraged because they think: "I can't do anything with that. I'm not able to change my life. I give up too quickly and then I get frustrated and angry with myself that I don't press on. Is there something that can happen positive for me, or am I always going to be destined to be struggling with so many things and never achieving masterly over any of them? Am I always going to be this like? Shouldn't I be farther along than I am? "

The frustration people experience because of that is they fail to see the passage in the context with which God gives it. The context of our passage today is in the middle of a book. It's not a passage to be isolated and pulled out and studied by itself. It's to be taken in the context of the entire letter that Paul writes, as I said 3 chapters of what we are to think. When we get to this part we understand he is not giving us a commandment that he expects us to try and figure it out. He's not telling us that we will do well if we just try harder. Any of you who are really honest with yourself will say, "I've tried hard in a lot of things and it never did any good." Have you ever had that experience?

I had this experience while on vacation. I had 5 days off and I didn't go anywhere because I wanted to just have peace. What I did, was every day the Lord brought a different trial in my life. It was very odd. So the first day I'm driving along and my back break pad breaks. It just snaps! I've never seen this happen, ever! It just broke in half and it's rattling around back there. I go, "Oh, I can fix that." So it's 3:00 pm on Monday and I tear my car apart. I jack it up in my driveway and I discover that you need a certain tool to twist in the piston on the caliper to make it so you can put the new pads in. I don't have the tools so I decided a pair of pliers is good enough. There are 4 holes and I stick it in there and start twisting it and it snaps the tip off my plier. I said, "What am I going to do now?" So I thought I would start tearing things apart and see what happens. I disconnected the emergency brake, I tore other things apart – I couldn't get it back together and I'm pretty mechanically inclined. Luckily I guy I know from back in high school days is a head mechanic at Mossy Nissan. I called him the next day. I had worked till 2 in the morning and gave up. He said, "Oh, bring it in and I'll fix it for you. And I'll fix it for free." I go, "Oh, free." Whenever anyone says free, you've got to be very careful. So I bring my car in. My emergency brake doesn't work, only my front brakes work. My back brakes don't work at all and I'm driving along with the peddle going almost to the floor. So I get there and he brings out all the people there and says, "This is why people shouldn't work on their own cars." Everybody there says, "Wow." There's a big lineup of people there with all their cars waiting saying, "Man, he messed that up, didn't he?" So there's like 30 people gathered around laughing. So that was a super humbling experience.

Why am I telling you that? Because it's the same way we approach Christianity, isn't it? "I think I can do that." Then we go about trying to do it with what we think will accomplish what God wants us to do and we try in our flesh and it doesn't work very well. Then we are embarrassed because we failed and then we cover it up and hide behind it. The reality is we just retreat and pull back from being what God's called us to be. Again, if you weren't here for the past few weeks and you don't remember chapter 4, verses 22-24, where it talks about how God has designed a new person for us, then you're just going to take the text today and think it's just a legalistic way of me telling you, "You've got to get

your act together and start doing something.” But if you were here and you understand it, then you are really going to experience the benefit and the blessing of what God has. So I’ll try to cover little pieces as we go.

I made a recap to see if this helps you. This is a recap of our old man and our new man. If you don’t know what that means, it’s Paul saying the way that you use to be before you came to faith. The guy that you use to be before Jesus Christ redeemed you.

<u>OLD NATURE</u>	<u>NEW NATURE</u>
Put Off	Put On
Corrupted	Created
In accordance with deceitful desires	In accordance with the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness

The old nature is to be “put off”. It means to cast it aside, to take off a robe and lay it down. You were to “put on” this new nature. You’re to pick it up and put it on. The old nature was corrupted, it wasn’t good for anything. It didn’t produce godliness, it didn’t produce what God desired, it was defeated, and it couldn’t produce. In other words, the pliers I tried to use to turn the caliper piston weren’t designed for that task, thus they failed. Our old nature was not designed to be godly. It was corrupted in the fall and it needed to be changed. So matter how much I used those pliers, they would never accomplish what the design for the real tool was. Now I have to throw them away because they broke. That’s how life happens for many of us. Our lives collapse and they break and people throw them away and we discard them. God’s like, “You are using the wrong thing to try and accomplish what I have for you.” So if you are trying to live the godly life in the flesh, you’ll never ever be able to do because then who would get the glory if you did do it? You would. God won’t share His glory with another and it is God who works in us to will and to do.

So that old nature is corrupted. The new man is created by the Lord; we saw that 2 weeks ago, that’s really a blessing. It’s not left to you to fix yourself up. God has created a new person, a new you, and you are to put that person on. The old nature was in accordance with the desires of deceit. It was corrupted and fueled and had passions for its own desires. The desires it had passions for were deceitful and they were manipulated by Satan, taking people captive to do his will.

The new nature is in accordance with God and His righteousness, holiness and truth. When Paul says, “Put the new man on” he is saying to act it out, begin to be who you really are, let the old way go, put

away the old way and start to live in the newness of life which God prepared in advance. In other words look at it like this, if the inner well of your life has been cleansed then let the outward flow of the waters of your life be clean. If the Lord has cleansed the inside then let that which flows from you be pure. It's inconsistent to be clean on the inside and pour forth dirt. It's inconsistent to be a new man on the inside and to live on the outward as if nothing ever happened any different. Paul is exhorting these people to change.

So let's look at this passage verse by verse. We are only going to cover 6 verses and I pray that you will really get something from this.

## **VERSE 25**

**25 "Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another."** In other words let lying never come near you and let truth always be with you. It's tragic that we even have to even talk like this, that Paul would have to write this. You have to remember that the Ephesians were recently converted. They were converted from paganism, converted from demon worship. They weren't church goers their whole life. Their conscience was seared over by their bad behavior, by their lust, by their abuses of the things God created to be received with thanksgiving. It was perverted and twisted, much like our society today.

If you say that honesty is something that most people have, you are very much deceived. Sincerely, when is the last time you went to buy a car? You know what it's like, don't you. "This car was driven by a little old lady." "Really?" "Yes, it's got 300,000 miles on it. She only went to church on Sunday." How old is she, like 500? You don't see truth anymore. You see white lies, or grey areas, or the ends justify the means, or "Does this dress make me look fat?" "Why no, honey." Or "Hey, do you like my haircut?" "Yeah, it looks great." No, it looks like a lawnmower fell on my head. We say things under the guise that the ends justify the means or we don't want to be hurtful. The reality is we are called to be truth bearers. What Paul is trying to do here is the Ephesian church had come out of such an evil lifestyle, that he wanted to bring truth to them so that the truth would create a conscience.

The tragic thing for us in society today is, where do you find truth? How long does it take your children before they say their first lie? My children could lie before they could walk. "Didn't you just have a cookie?" "No." And it's all over their face! They lie before they can walk. So should that outward behavior that is so prevalent in the world, should that be true in the body of Christ? No. We should be people who bring truth. It says we should do that because we are members of one another. This is how you have to really think of it through: falsehood tends to loosen the bonds of brotherhood. If you are close to somebody and you find out that they lied to you, are you that close as you were before? Or do you feel like maybe your whole relationship is a lie? If they say this to my face, what do they say behind my back?

The truth is the Lord is telling us as his people we are to be different on the inside and that inside difference should manifest itself in different outside behaviors that are completely contrary to what you would see if you went anywhere else where the name of the Lord isn't named. There should be something distinctly different about us; something unique about us. In today's day and age, an honest

person is very hard to find. Tragically they are hard to find even in the church. We are so preoccupied with what people think, that we'll cover things up or be deceptive or shade the truth or slate it or blow it up bigger than it was, instead of being straight forward and truthful. If we can't be truthful in the small things, then how can we be truthful in the important things of life? If we are not known as a people of truth how can we say that we have the only truth? ***Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.*** How can we say that unless we back it up with truth in every area to make our witness truthful. That's what the Lord is looking for here. He say's our members are one and another. That's why we should be truthful. Think of the body again. We talked about this before. Is the body truthful with itself? Of course it is. Does the eye try to deceive the hand? Does the brain try to deceive the foot? "Foot, step on that glass. It won't hurt!" No.

## HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SEASICK?

I don't get seasick but they say it's like feeling like you are going to die compounded by the fear that you won't. So you are on a boat and this is how people get seasick. I learned this from a doctor; our body is very sensitive to motion. If you walk you don't get sick because your brain communicates to the eye and the ear that motion will take place and you can walk and everything is fine. It's involuntary motion that makes you sick because your brain is sitting there and goes "I'm not moving" and your ears going "Yeah, we're going up and down" and the eyes going "No, I can see the ground, its fine." Then seasickness comes or motion sickness comes. It comes from the inability to communicate properly. So there is deception going on. It's true in the body itself physically and it's true in the body of the Lord practically. If there is miscommunication going on, if there's dishonesty going on, if there's deception going on, illness and sickness flows into the body. So Paul says, "Put away" once and for all. It doesn't mean put it away today and bring it back out tomorrow. It means put it away for good. That shouldn't be named among God's people. So it says, "***Having put away***".

## IS LYING OK?

Let's talk about this lying business. Is lying ever OK? When I talk to people about this they often say the end justifies the means. If you spouse says, "Does this make me look fat?" And you say, "No" but in reality you are thinking it does make you look fat. It's not being mean to say, "You know that's not the most flattering piece of attire you might wear. Maybe you should try something else." Is it better to do that or is it better to say, "No honey, everything's fine." Then later on they come back to you and say, "You know 10 people said this dress isn't flattering for me. Why did you do that?" We hide behind, "I just want people to feel good. I want people to like me." There's a right way to say things and truth is always what you should say.

People fall back on scripture and say, "Look, in the bible there are 2 incidences where people were deceptive and God seems to commend them." I'm telling you that's not true.

## **Biblical Lying Incidence #1**

You have the Hebrew midwives in Exodus Chapter 1. Pharaoh told them that whenever the Jews have a male born child, he wanted them to kill it. He did not want male Jews coming up because they are slaves. He wanted to keep them manageable. So the Hebrew midwife's said, "You know Pharaoh these Jewish women are so strong that by the time we get there the child is already born so there is nothing we can do." People say these midwives were deceptive and God blessed them so it must be OK. No, because if you read the text it says the Hebrew midwives did not kill the male children because **they feared the Lord**. So God is commending them for their fear of the Lord, not for being deceptive.

## **Biblical Lying Incidence #2**

The story of Rahab that is commended in Hebrews 11. Spies go into the city that the Lord is going to give Joshua and Rahab told the spies that they can hide on her roof. People come and said "We think there's some spies here, where are they?" Rahab says, "I don't know. I don't know anything about them." So Rahab didn't turn in the spies, she denied that she knew them. So Hebrews 11 doesn't say, "The Lord blessed her for her deceit." It says she is commended because she **welcomed the spies**. In other words, when the spies came she saw kinship there. She said "I worship the God that you worship. I have heard of him, I follow him, I believe in him. And I receive you. Not like the rest of our people that would kill you, I receive you." The Lord commends her for that.

When we are talking about lying the bible has so much to say about it. I'll give you 2 verses that I thought were the most powerful.

**Proverbs 6:17: "The Lord hates lying."** That's one big check on does God approve? No.

**Revelation 21:7-8 "All liars find their place in the lake of fire."**

God takes lying seriously. It's such a serious business, it would be very wrong for me to belittle that or to take it lightly or to make light of it. So do these 2 incidences confirm that God is OK with the ends justifying the means? The answer is NO. Why is that the case? Because lying comes from our old nature, chapter 4 verse 22. That's the fruit of our old nature. Why more than that? Because Satan is the father of all lies. When we speak lies we speak the language of our old master. Those things shouldn't be true of a person who has a new master. So the Lords says let your language be truthful. It's such a serious business in scripture. Proverbs is full of talking about the way that we speak in particularly about lying and the consequences of it. Lying comes from that old nature but I think what the real heart of the matter is that when scripture says, "all liars find themselves in the lake of fire", what that's saying is that a person who is habitually dishonest, a person who is habitually lying, a person who's way is the way of untruth, has never had a regenerating experience in his heart because out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. The warning is: If your life is marked with dishonesty you better check to see whether you know the Lord at all.

**2 Corinthians 13:5: “Test yourselves, to see whether or not you are in the faith.** This is a very serious business. The lies of Satan beget the lies in the sinner. That’s why the Lord says, “That shouldn’t be named among you. Let truth manifest in the body.” So Paul exhorts the Ephesians to be truthful, to be truth bearers, to be honest with each other.

I recognize that we want to be sensitive and encouraging to people but I don’t think the Lord would ever be OK with us being dishonest. He would always say isn’t it better to be honest because there’s a way that you can speak truth and love so that people know you’re a person of integrity. People know that what you say you mean and you mean what you say. You are not a people pleaser. You speak truthfully on small matters therefore on the most important of all matters you can speak truthfully about eternal life. That’s the heart of it. A person who has dishonesty everywhere else has no credibility to bring forth the truth. They claim to know God but by their actions they deny Him, scripture says. It’s not enough to say I believe that belief should manifest itself in certain characteristics of truth.

## ANGER

### VERSE 26

If we don’t have truth, we often have the next passage that Paul wants to warn us about in verse 26: **“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.”**

Now the Ancient Roman Poet Horace was not a Christian but he said this: **“Anger is momentary insanity”**. It’s always been one of my favorite quotes for it is so true. As a matter of fact when I was taking biblical counseling, we did a thing where we observed. There’s a guy and his wife sitting there and they are having marital issues and we are observing. The woman said this, “I am having a problem with anger but it’s not really my problem, it’s his problem.” I thought, “Wow, this is really insightful. It’s called pass the buck!” Then she said, “Here’s the reality, I explode and then it’s all over with.” Now here’s the husband’s response: “Yeah, like an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. It’s explodes and it’s all over with but look at the damage and the consequences of it.”

Now Solomon has a good response when people come at us in anger: **Proverbs 15:1: “A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.”** How easy is it for us as Christians to justify our anger under righteous indignation? We do it all the time, don’t we? “Oh, I’m having righteous indignation.” “Really, is that what you call it? I’m not seeing good fruit; I’m not seeing godliness producing. I’m seeing a lot of malice, wrath, evil, backbiting, and slander. That’s what I’m seeing.” How do we discern righteous anger?

**Proverbs 15:8: “A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.**

Now there are 2 assertions here about anger:

1. There is a time biblically to be angry.
2. The time to stay angry is very short.

There are good grounds for getting angry but there are no grounds for holding a grudge. There are very strong reasons for that.

When it says, ***“do not let the sun go down on your anger”*** it means let the day of your anger be the day of your reconciliation. Don't give anger a foothold in your life. Don't paint religion on it by calling it “righteous indignation” because it's probably not what it is. We'll look at a few reasons why that is not the case.

If reconciliation is impossible for you right now, then don't plot revenge, don't hold a grudge, learn biblically how to deal with that. The first usage of the word “anger” in scripture is really important. There's a lot called the “law of first usage”.

### **LAW OF FIRST USAGE**

The first time angry is used in the bible is Genesis 4. That's where Cain wanted to kill Abel.

The first time grace was used is Genesis 6. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. So you look at Noah's life and you see what grace is all about, saving from what you deserve.

The first time love was used in the bible, Genesis 22: Abraham offering Isaac, the ***son that you love, offer him to me.***”

### **Biblical Anger**

Again the first use of angry is in Genesis 4 where Cain was angry with Abel and wanted to kill him. The first use of the word “anger” in scripture is Genesis 27 when Esau wanted to kill Jacob. So you see that the introduction of anger has never been something positive, it's always been really negative.

Verse 26 says ***“Be angry and do not sin”***. Verse 31 says ***“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away.”*** So what's the difference between good anger and bad anger? Is there a difference between a righteous indignation? What is that?

### **RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION: BEING ANGRY IN A PROPER BIBLICAL WAY.**

#### **1) IT'S BASED UPON GOD**

***James 1:19-20: “Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God.”*** The anger which rises in us quickly is most likely human anger of the flesh. So if all of a sudden you are fine and the next minute you are raging and boiling over and it pops up quickly, it's probably anger of the flesh. It will not ever accomplish God's righteous purposes. The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God EVER. So you have to see that good anger is based upon God. The target of the anger is sin against God.

Jesus opened not his mouth like a lamb led to the slaughter and as a sheep before its shearers is silent. When they said, "You are a son of fornication" he didn't open his mouth. When they blasphemed his Father, he opened his mouth. When they blaspheme your Father, you can open your mouth. When they blaspheme you, keep it to yourself. Do you see the difference? Most often we get angry not when God's honor is at stake, it's when ours is. Not when God's plans are being opposed, when ours are. Righteous anger comes because God is the object that is being offended. It's OK to be angry at that. Should you be angry at the things that anger God? Absolutely yes. Should we be angry that in our country we kill our children? Yes, we should be angry. Should we shoot people in front of their places of employment to express our anger? No. Should we be angry? Yes. Should we hate the people? No. Do you see the difference? You're angry at the principle because it violates God's word. It neglects God's character. It demeans God's value. It opposes God's purposes. Not it makes your life inconvenient. Not somebody took your parking spot so you slash their tires. That's not righteous indignation, its foolishness.

## **2) IT'S MIXED WITH GRIEF**

There's only one time in scripture the bible specifically says that Jesus got angry. It's in Mark 3:5. Jesus is in the synagogue and it's the Sabbath day. He's going to heal a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. The Pharisees are like "Oh no, it's the Sabbath day. You can't do any work. Healing is a work." It's like when I go to visit my brother in Texas and they live in the bible belt so they are very religious. They're not very godly, but they're very religious. So you go there and they close everything on Sunday. I asked one time, "Where's a place I can go to buy a soda?" They said, "Oh no, it's Sunday. No place is open." I said, "What does that have to do with anything?" They said, "It's Sunday, I can't believe you'd be so evil as to ask to buy a soda on Sunday." I'm like, the bible says that "to one man considers one day holy; each man considers everyday alike, each man should set aside in his own mind what he should do." Where's my coke? It's that same thing. It's that mental attitude of people saying "I don't care about this person. I care about our religious system." We don't do that here.

Jesus is angry. Look at the text in Mark 3:5: "**And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart.**" This is God's attitude. It's OK to be angry when people are sinning against God. It's OK to be angry at the sin. It's OK to be angry at the hardness of heart. It's OK to be angry at the obstinate, stiff-necked attitudes of people that hate the Lord. But Jesus was grieved over their **hardness of heart**. So as long as there is hope for the sinner, we should have compassion in our heart because God can save them. Do you see the difference? Our anger is fine as long as it is mingled and mixed with grief for the sinner. As long as we maintain that balance and there is a righteous anger. Scripture says, "Be angry and sin not." That's how you discern it. If it is sin against God, if you're grieved

for the person committing it, if you have compassion for them and you want them to come to faith, then that's a righteous anger. Even that means that the time to be angry is short.

Look at Verse 26 again. ***"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger."*** Don't let the sun go down on your anger. The time to be angry is short. What people have a tendency to do is say, "I'll just move to Alaska, the land of the midnight sun. Because it's light there sometimes for 6 months straight, I can go up there and be angry for a whole 6 months because the sun doesn't go down." So it's a loophole for justifying my hard heart and anger. That's not what the text means at all. It means the time to be angry is short. Not move towards where you can get the most light to justify your bad behavior.

Anger is a very dangerous emotion. I'm being straightforward with you. It's the #1 reason for relationships to collapse; it's the #1 reason for people to commit suicide, even though they say it is depression. Depression is just anger turned inwardly. Anger expressed outwardly is wrath. Anger is a problem and God knows it is a problem. It should not ever be nurtured, it should not be fueled, and it should not be fostered. It's the moral equivalent of biological adrenaline. In an incident of fear your body secretes adrenaline. In that sense it is good. It causes you to do certain things. But if your body continually secreted adrenaline it would damage your heart and kill you. Anger is like that too. A little bit of righteous indignation is good. To be a person marked by wrath is bad. In the same way as adrenaline constantly would destroy your physical heart, anger will destroy your emotional heart and it will make you hard hearted. That's why the Lord is constantly warning against it. So many hearts have been hardened and destroyed because of anger. It's fueled, it's fostered, it's nurtured and people justify it instead of saying, "My anger never works the righteousness of God. Is my anger about I've been wronged or is my anger about God's been wronged?" If you don't discern the two it's very easy to continue to live that kind of life of passionate anger. God doesn't want his people to be marked as people who are angry all the time. He wants his people to be marked as a people of peace, as a people of love, as disciples that love one another, not hate each other. That's what the world doesn't have. The world doesn't have truth, the world doesn't have genuine love, the world doesn't have fellowship, the world doesn't have koinonia, and it doesn't have passion for the Lord. It has nothing. It has self-seeking, self-absorbed, step-on-each-other, make advance kind of people. That will lie and sell off their own mother for a buck. Those things should not be named in the Church of God.

### **VERSES 27 & 28**

Now here's his exhortation to us.

***Verse 27 "and give no opportunity to the devil."*** The word here means literally, don't give Satan an occasion for acting, don't give him an area in your life to move into. That's what it means "give no opportunity". Don't give him a space to set up camp in your life. You say, "What is it that gives him place to set up camp in my life?" Lying, hypocrisy and anger give Satan a foothold in your life and he will gladly set up camp there. He will turn that and twist that and quench and crush everything God is working in your life and he will make it of no effect because people will see that and see hypocrisy. The

scripture is strongly warning us saying don't let those fruits be true of you anymore because by doing so you don't realize it but you are giving Satan a foothold in your life. If you think he's just going to stop there, you're wrong. A little leaven will leaven the whole lump. He will work through the whole batch of dough. He will push through every area and even the place that you think you're strong. **Let he who thinks he stand take heed lest he fall.** In our own flesh we are not powerful enough to resist him. **But I can do all things through Him who gives us strength.** So that's God's commandment. Don't let that be true.

Now look at verse 28. This is the place where it gets very practical again. You say why is Paul writing to people who were kleptomaniacs? Were there kleptomaniacs in the church? Remember people are coming from paganism, so they are probably still practicing their old behaviors. Don't limit it to just stealing. You say, "I'm not stealing." Let me ask you this, "Are you cheating on your taxes?" That's stealing. Ooohh. Do you switch the labels on something at the store to get it cheaper? Do you go up and say, "This one costs \$5.00 so how about this one being \$5.00." That's stealing. Pay the extra buck and have a clear conscience! So He says, **Verse 28 "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need."** So remember our obedience comes from Verse 24 "a renewed mind", renewing our mind, thinking rightly and it created new self. The new self that God created that we would walk in good deeds.

**Philippians 2:13: "God works in us to will and to do."** So this obedience needs to come from a desire. Don't think that desire to even obey the Lord is something that is natural to you. It's a miracle. The natural man doesn't accept the things from the Spirit of God; he cannot understand them because they're spiritually discerned. So if you have a desire to walk with the Lord at all, that's a miracle. That's God working in you. He gives you that desire. You go, "OK, he gave me the desire, how is it going to happen?" He will work in you to will and then to do so that God gets the glory. Not you. **What you have that you didn't receive**, scripture says, so why do you boast about it as if you didn't receive it? In other words, anything good that happens in our life has always been because of the Lord. Anything bad that happens in our life is always because of us. God restrains even the bad that happen in our life because he doesn't let us be as bad as we could be. He retains even on the rest of the world. That's God's grace. Anything good, anything godly, always comes from the Lord and that is what God does graciously to his people so the he receives the glory.

**Hebrews 13:21: "May the Lord equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight."**

Let's talk about things we've seen so far.

- How should I not lie then? By faith.
- How should I not have anger? By faith.
- How should I not steal anymore? By faith.

You say that's so simplistic. Let me tell how Paul puts it and you know this verse well.

**Galatians 2:20:** *“<sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

How do I go from being a liar to a truth bearer? By faith. I recognize in my flesh dwells no good thing but I recognize ***I can do all things through Him who gives me strength***. I recognize that ***what he began he will complete*** and though it's a process He will insure that the job gets done. God's purpose is to confirm me into the image of His Son and as I yield myself to that, He does the work so that He gets the glory. And I get the freedom. That's what it means to be a Christian. It's not clean yourself up and do good.



I want to hit that point very hard because you need to get this. Look what the text says about the thief in particular: ***“let him work hard working.”*** Work is not part of the curse. Toil in your word was part of the curse. Adam worked the garden before the fall. I'm sure he loved it. It was after the fall that it became a burden. So don't think that work is a bad thing. Work is a good thing. God created us to be workers. We are to serve Him, we are to follow Him. We are created by God to be workers. We are not supposed to be burned out serving the Lord. If you are burned out serving the Lord, you are serving the Lord in the position you weren't supposed to be in. The position that you were called to be in and gifted to be in is a joy for you and you wouldn't want to do anything else.

Why would Dr. Littler give up his weekend to play piano or banjo or guitar or whatever he wants to play? Why would he do that when he's got, I don't know how many hundreds of patients and he's busy all the time? Because God created him and gifted him and called him to do it and it's a joy for him. We don't have to call him every week and say, “Hey, are you coming in to do your job?” No, he's like one of the first guys here because it's his passion and that brings him joy. That's what I am trying to tell you, serving the Lord is joyful. If it's not you are in the wrong position. Let us find the right position for you and then you are going to be happy. So this is really serious here now.

There are 3 commands in this text. Let's look at them closely and let's discern how to go from a good secular life to an incredibly blessed, sacred life.

### **1) Let the thief no longer steal**

**2) Let him instead labor performing in his hands what is good**

**3) That he may be able to give to those who have need.**

There's this progression here if you study closely, going from an inferior secular way of working, or not working, to a sacred or honored or grace-filled way of working.

**1a)** You can steal in order to have. That's illegal, it's immoral and it's sinful. Right? We are all on the same page with that. Stealing is not good.

**2a)** You can work in order to have. That's legal but it can possibly be sinful. There's nothing uniquely Christian in that, is there? No.

**3a)** You can work in order to give. Now there's something unique in that because getting in order to give is very different than the American dream of saying "You've earned it, you should have it."

So first is sin; second is potentially sin. It's legal but potentially sin if you get everything so you can spend it on yourself and be a hoarder – that's sinning. Uniquely Christian is: "Lord everything I have come from you. What's the best use for your kingdom because this belongs to you and I belong to you. Everything you gave me is yours and I manage it." That's a Christian attitude and it's very different than the world.

I'll give you a couple of principles here.

- God ordained work, not stealing, as a means of getting what somebody needs.
- Our work should be something good. The text here is "good". If you come to me and say, "The Lord provided a job for me." I go "Great, that's awesome." You go, "Yeah, I'm a drug dealer." That's not something good. Are we clear on that? It's not uniquely Christian. The text doesn't just say go and get work. It says do something good. It says honest. The word honest here means good. It means that if you say "I got a job as a pimp the Lord provided." No. Satan deceived you. That's not something good. So let your work be a means of grace. Remember your mouth was to be a means of grace, now let your work be a means of grace.

I want you to see real closely God's motive here for us as Christians. The motive for working is not just what the world thinks. Don't work so that you can hoard. That's not uniquely Christian. God's goal in his people is not reached when we simply quit stealing. God's not like, "That's awesome, you made it." God's goal isn't reached when we just stop stealing and then actually start working in something good. That's not God's goal ultimately reached either. Doesn't even a philanthropist do that who knows not the Lord? Our goal is reached when we work in order to have so that we can give. That's uniquely Christian and that usually brings a lot of silence on people. They are like, "Oh, now I know. You wait 5 months to talk about giving and now you are going to hammer me. Right?" No, I haven't talked about giving in the 5 months I've been here. I wouldn't lean on somebody and say "If you don't put in an extra percentage there's something wrong with you." I'd say, "You know what, your heart is what God is after. **Love the Lord your God with all heart, soul, mind and strength.** If that is right we don't have to talk about anything else." That the root of everything.

When you are in high school and you meet a girl and you're like, "Oh, I love this girl." I go "Really, you don't but OK you're infatuated." Do you have to say, "You need to call her on the phone maybe once a day. You should see her once in a while." No you don't because like every day you're thinking, how am I going to see her, how am I going to spend time with her, how am I going to talk to her. You might want to consider taking her out for dinner or a movie or something. "Well that costs too much of a percentage of my income." Do you think like that? Not you don't think like that. You're like, "OK, whatever I got. I'll go work harder so I have more so that I can lavish it upon the person that I care about."



It's the same with the Lord. Jesus said one thing, **"It's more blessed to give than receive."** Here's my extent on giving for today: If you've never given anything, try giving something and see if it is not more blessed to give than receive. I'll tell you that it is. This is what the Lord is after. God's goal isn't reached we stop stealing, God's goal isn't reached when we just start working in good work, God's goal is reached when we work in order that we have to give. We work so that we can give.

This is pretty revolutionary. It takes the Christian mind-set from just something that sits in the head to something that is lived out. The bible was so clear that the widows and orphans should be taken care of. Those are widows and orphans in the church. If a person comes in as a single mom, as I said before a few weeks ago, there should be 200 dads here for her son. 200 men who would model what a good father is supposed to look like to him. If there's a lady that comes to church who is destitute as a widow, and she comes in and says, "I need my care worked on." We should say, "We can take care of some of those issues because we in the body have been given gifts that we can use to meet your needs like that." Not say, "Tough, noogie for you, I'm going out to drop \$50 on a steak for me." Do you see the difference? It's not uniquely Christian to do that. It's uniquely Christian to say, "Everything I have came from the Lord, how would you have me use this for you today? And I'll trust that tomorrow you will give me more. If you don't, then I trust you will send somebody who will help me in my time of need." That's Christianity. It's not go to church, ignore everybody, and go home. You can do that in a lot of places but that's not what God would intend for His Body and that not what the Lord intends here.

So back in Verse 28 he is talking about our employment. Our employment should be gainful, our employment should be honoring, and our employment should be a place where we serve the Lord as a missionary in our place of employment. That would only be seen if we work hard, if we are honest, if we put in our time, if we put in our effort, if we appear that we serve the Lord and not men – then people will ask the reason for the hope that you have. Then when they see what you've earned and you give it all away they are going to go "What the heck is wrong with you?" That is what people are going to ask. Until they see that they are going to think you are just like them. So that's your outward behavior.



## VERSE 29

Now Paul's talking about what we speak. No just honesty, it's not just telling the truth **29 "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."** The Greek word here for corrupting is "sapos" and it's used only one other time in the bible again. In one other context where Jesus is talking about the tree and it's fruit.

**Luke 6:43: "No good tree bears bad fruit."** That's an emphatic statement. The word "bad" here is the same word as "corrupt".

**Matthew 7:17: "Fruit determines the tree whether it's healthy or diseased."** That's again, fruit. Health, disease, good/bad – that's the same word "corrupt".

**Matthew 12:33: "Make the tree either good or bad."** So he's saying you know them by their fruit, make the tree good or bad, if the tree bears bad fruit it is diseased or it's not a tree at all. The same thing is true here. It says "let no corrupt talk come out of your mouth. What fruit comes from your mouth?"

Again, let's talk about God's goal here. God's goal is not that you replace lying with nice words. God's goal here is not just to stop swearing. God's goal is not just to put good language or acceptable language in your mouth. God's goal here in the same way as secular work is to be a display of grace; all of our speech is to be a display of grace. Or as your mom use to tell you, "If you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything." Our mouth should be full of grace not full of something else.

Let's look specifically at it. It's to be building up, it means to be edifying. Scripture has so much to say about how we should speak.

- Life and death is in the tongue
- A terrible fire is caused by the tongue
- It's like the rudder of a great ship



Why does God spend so much time talking about how we should talk? Because God wants our credibility that what we say is truthful so that it prepares the way for the gospel. When we talk to the brethren, when we talk to the brothers and sisters, we say things that build them up. When we talk to the world we talk on the basis of the gospel. When we are tested to see whether our gospel has any validity to it; when we are tested to see if we'll lie, we speak truth. God works in us that which is pleasing in his sight. When people see people who tell truth, they are very inclined to listen when they give it. People know when you are not. People know when your intent is not to build up. People know when your intent is to tear down.

***Luke 6:45: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."***

You say, "Well, I guess my language is always bad." Then your heart is always bad. That's the diagnosis. You don't need a doctor for that. You need Jesus. If your heart is spewing forth rottenness, you don't just put a piece of tape over your mouth. You address the heart.

***Ezekiel 36:26: "God will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh that love Him".*** So you go to the source to fix that.

### **VERSE 30**

***"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."*** Now why is this statement here? Because the Holy Spirit's work in all that he does is to instill hope. He works to instill hope. He seals us so that we will have hope. Your hope is to be in the day of redemption. If you don't have hope in the day of redemption, if you're not looking forward to that day of redemption, if you're not hoping in the Lord that he is working everything ***after the counsel of His will*** (Ephesians 1:11) ***for the good of you*** (Romans 8), if you don't believe that - then you are not hoping in the day of redemption and you are hoping in something else. If you are hoping in something else, you

are not hoping in God. What do you think, as far as language goes, would come out of the mouth of someone who isn't hoping in the Lord? Nothing. Dirty water. Not clean water.

So when you focus on your problems, when you give up hoping on God, when you focus on your circumstances, when you become bitter, angry, and resentful – you grieve the Holy Spirit. That's what this is talking about. How do I grieve the Holy Spirit? You grieve him by not trusting in him. You grieve him by exhibiting the wrong kind of fruit because the fruit is exhibiting the lack of contentment in the heart. So that's what grieves him when the fruit are manifested. It says "don't grieve him." The language that will flow out of a heart that doesn't hope in the Lord will never be edifying. When you see people walking around who are always bitter, and always angry, and always speaking things that tear people down, and never have anything good to say about somebody else – they are angry. At the very core level they are not hoping in the Lord. They are not looking forward to the day of redemption. They are not trusting in Him. They are not laying ahold of His promises because they do not believe in Him. That grieves Him.

What Paul is telling us and what God is telling us is when we see those things manifested in our life not only are they detrimental to us, not only are they destructive to us, not only will they hardened our heart – we are grieving the Holy Spirit who is sealed us for the day of redemption.

The great hope here is even when you do that, even when we are faithless – God will remain faithful for He cannot disown himself. So even if you grieve the Holy Spirit and you are a Christian, he won't leave you. He'll just discipline you but he won't leave you. He'll take you to the woodshed and you don't want to go there.

So what's the application? There are 6 things.

### **VERSE 31**

***"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."***

- 1) **ANGER** - We already defined that.
- 2) **BITTERNESS** - It means pointed, painful things that leave a bad taste in your mouth. It means a person who is always bitter, resentful, discontented, somebody who that even being around them makes you like "ugh". Its saying don't be one of those people. Put that away.
- 3) **WRATH** – the Greek word is "thumos". It means temperance. It means don't be known as a person who is always boiling over. If you are going to boil over for something, boil over with passion for Jesus but just don't boil over because you like to get angry. Don't be like that.
- 4) **CLAMOR** – this is an interesting word. It comes literally from the raven squawking. Don't be a person who is always out there squawking, loud, wailing, emotional meltdown and babbling. It's a prophet of doom saying "Woe is me; my life is always going to be so horrible. It's never going to get any better. God' promises are good for everybody except for me." When you give those people promises they say "Yeah, but I don't believe it". That's clamor. Don't do that. Do you not realize that anybody who speaks against the promises of God is blaspheming God?

When you say, “I believe it for somebody else but I don’t believe it for me because I’m too far gone” do you not realize you are saying that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was insignificant or wasn’t sufficient enough or that God didn’t know enough to take into account your sin? So all of a sudden God isn’t all-knowing and He’s not omniscient and you are tearing away His character under the guise of self-pity. That’s clamor. Don’t do that. It’s the constant noise of constant dissatisfaction. Or as the modern people would say, it’s a life full of drama. Don’t be a drama queen.

- 5) **SLANDER** – this is just evil speaking. The word literally is blasphemy. It’s not just blaspheming against God, it’s don’t let your words cause other people to think little of somebody else as you speak negatively about them. If you wouldn’t say it to their face, don’t say anything behind their back. Period. If you’ve got something to say to their face, do a Matthew 18 and go to them. It’s easy, it’s simple, and it preserves unity.
- 6) **MALICE** – it’s ill will. It’s the motive for what you say and do. Don’t let your thinking and speaking be fueled by ill thoughts for somebody. Put those things away.

“Putting away” is an interesting Greek phrase. It means this: Removing the attachment, to carry it away, to break the bond of. At Christmas time I tear down the garage and I bring my junk out of the attic and I put up the Christmas stuff. At the end of Christmas I pack it all up all nice and neat and I put it away. The intent is that I put it away to always pull it back out. This is not the Lord saying, “Now pack it up nice and neat and in an appropriate day it will be OK to be malicious. On an appropriate day it will be good to be bitter.” God is saying, I’m bringing by, the Holy Spirit is coming along with his dump truck this morning, driving through the sanctuary, and I want you to take all that junk and throw it in there once and for all and let it go. I want you to put it away. I want you to break the attachment that it has on you.”

There is never an appropriate time to be bitter. There is never an appropriate time to be full of slander. There is never an appropriate time to be a clamoring, murmuring, whining, bitter person. Put it away. Once and for all, break its attachment.

What am I supposed to replace it with? The Lord. You are supposed to replace it with more of the Lord. More of the fruits of the spirit which are much more joyful for you. You won’t need botex injections because you won’t be frowning so much! You can move on with some peace and joy here. This is God’s heart and it’s what Paul is saying for us. He wants us to move on.



The picture I have here is for the techie guys now. The Lord is saying your hard drive is contaminated with these viruses and I want you to do a format so you can clean-sweep them away. I want you to reload a new program called "The Holy Spirit Goodness". I want you to trust in Him and I want you to move on with Him.

The Lord's command here is "put it away". That's not a command he leaves to you alone. He said, "Cast it upon me because I care for you" and he will take it. Let Him take it. There's nothing fruitful to be held by keeping it.

In closing, I usually have a text from scripture to give you a story from the bible to apply this. I was reading this week a book called "Encouragement" by Derick Bingham; he's a guy from Ireland. The part of his book that I really liked wasn't that it was really encouraging. The part that struck me the most was when he said in his town they found a body of a young woman floating in the river. She committed suicide. She jumped off a bridge and killed herself. She had a suicide note in a Ziploc bag taped in her pocket. Her suicide note had 2 words in it. You know what the words were? THEY SAID. That stuck something with me. I began to do a little research reading on the effects of people's verbiage on other people. I don't know if you know this, but there are so many young students now that commit suicide over the things that people say to them. Psychologists have actually come up with a term for it. It's called "bullycide". So people are bullied in verbiage and they kill themselves over it.

Do you not realize that in the House of God the same thing has happened? Do you not realize that our life is supposed to be a life of grace but so are the things that we say? These fruits of the old man, this malice and bitterness are to be put away from us so that a flowing force of grace will build up the body. God wants us to be a people that tell truth, give truth, and speak life to people. The world is dying from the speech of its own. The world is killing itself over the speech of its own. Shouldn't and couldn't there possibly come something uniquely better from the Lord's own where life would flow?

That my exhortation to you. True spirituality is not being articulately gifted to portray fine sounding arguments about Jesus. True spirituality is discerning: Is what I'm going to say edifying? Is my anger justified because God is offended? Or should I just learn to bridle my tongue? That's true spirituality. Knowing when to bridle your tongue and when there is time to say something, knowing what to say biblically, doctrinally, and knowing how to say it in a heart that's gracious. That's what the Lord wants us to be like, that's what the Lord calls us as individuals to function like, and that's what should be

manifest in His body when His people get together. By His grace, that will happen as we lean on Him and trust in Him.

Let's pray together:

*Father, thank you so much for being here today with us. I pray Lord that you would speak to each heart in this room. Not with condemnation because there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. But I pray Lord that you would speak to us now. That something that each one has heard you would bring to their remembrance, something that you brought in and that I didn't even say. You would bring that and say, "I want to deal with you about that." I pray Lord that you would give your people courage to respond to you. So with our heads bowed and our eyes closed, I just going to say, how many of you here today would say "I came here today and my life is just always been manifest by saying the wrong thing and doing the wrong thing and being self-consumed. Never being preoccupied with the Lord." Maybe the reason for that is you don't know the Lord at all. If you don't, come to Him. There's no condemnation. He will change that in you and work those things in you that I have been talking about. If that's your desire let me see your hands. Bless you, bless you. Now let me talk to the main portion of us here. We are believers in the Lord. How many of you would say, "My mouth has not always been a mouth that flowed forth grace. My life has not always flowed forth grace. I haven't looked at my job as an opportunity to show grace. I ask that the Lord would change my heart and enable me to see." Many of you, many of you. The response to that is "Lord, work in me that which is pleasing to you. Lord, change me so that I would be more like you. Lord, teach me to be angry in a due season when it is righteous. Teach me to be short when I am angry, not to hold it forever. Teach me to be passionate Lord but never evil. Teach me to be a one who discerns a good word in season." So Father, please mold us, please change us today. As you move through our congregation, as you move by us, may we cast our anger and bitterness, wrath and malice, jealousy, rage – may we cast it upon you because you care for us and may you replace it with grace. And for that we are very careful to thank you and praise you in Jesus' name. And everybody said. Amen*

