

BELOVED CHILDREN IMITATE THEIR FATHER

Ephesians 4:25-5:2, especially 4:31-5:2

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25 March A.D. 2012

Because we are marked, sealed-by-the Spirit-members of Christ's body,
beloved children of the Father,
we are to imitate the kind, fragrant, self-sacrificing love of God.

Introduction: The Butterfly Effect

4:25: As we're members of one another *lay aside falsehood and speak the truth.*

Paul quotes a redemption context (see Zech 8:18-23; compare Isa 65-66) Messianic blessing & judging.

Zechariah 8:14-17 (NAS) ¹⁴ "For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Just as I purposed to do harm to you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,' says the LORD of hosts, 'and I have not relented, ¹⁵ so I have again purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear! ¹⁶ 'These are the things which you should do: **speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates.** ¹⁷ 'Also let none of you devise evil in your heart against another, and do not love perjury; for all these are what I hate,' declares the LORD."

'Trying to grow spiritually without hearing the truth about yourself from somebody else is like trying to do brain surgery on yourself without a mirror. John Ortberg sermon, "Loving Enough to Speak the Truth"

Don't make promises God doesn't keep. Account for the shaky ground and patches of quicksand. Don't deny our disappointments or turn away from our broken hearts. Explain the beasts lying in wait, the damaged goods that can't be fixed, and the trouble in the streets. Show us God in the horrors hidden under cover of night and the prayers that don't get answered. Make your words equal to our predicament. Give us faith as wild as the world. Describe that, and we'll hang on every word.

Michael Heher, "Words to Match," Image Journal (Summer 1999)

↗ *be angry/don't sin, leaving the devil a loophole*

4:26-29: As we're members of one another → *work to share rather than being a taker*

↘ *don't speak rotting-words but building-words: give grace!*

Paul quotes a context where David is being dishonored/slandered: God calls all to tremble & not sin.

Psalms 4 (NAS) *For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.* ¹ Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer. ² O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? *How long* will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? *Selah.* ³ But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him. ⁴ **Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still.** *Selah.* ⁵ Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD. ⁶ Many are saying, "Who will show us *any* good?" Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O LORD! ⁷ You have put gladness in my heart, More than when their grain and new wine abound. ⁸ In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.

BE ANGRY, BUT... Anger is a natural response to fear and to the disruption of your goals: can you separate the personal from the principle, the assumed motives from the sure truth?

Own your anger, take it to/toward Christ who's in charge & REST towards neighbors: God will justify & judge.

WORK TO SHARE: Luther to a shoemaker who wanted to serve God: *Make good shoes and sell them at a fair price.* Don't steal by not working when you can; don't steal reputations to puff yourself up and limit others.

Be a maker rather than a taker!

ROTTING OR BUILDING-UP WORDS:

Are you an anger addict: *can you go 24 hours without speaking harshly? 24 without speaking grace?*

4:30-31: As those marked and sealed by the Holy Spirit of God ***don't grieve Him, but put away...***

<i>bitterness</i>	<i>wrath/rage</i>	<i>nursed anger</i>
<i>clamor/shouting</i>	<i>slander/cursing</i>	<i>all malice</i>

Toward what does the Spirit who seals lead? ***To shape us into the image and voice of the Son!***

You & I cannot consistently put on Christ & put off the flesh/old nature alone:
together we are the working body of Christ.

4:32-5:2: As beloved children ***we're to imitate our Father by walking in love.***

We cannot imitate self-existence, eternity, majesty, omniscience, omnipotence & omnipresence, **BUT...**

➤ ***was kind & tender hearted and forgave in Christ***

God in Christ → ***loved you*** [plural]: *a word rooted in the reality of covenant commitment/choice*

⋈ ***gave himself up as an offering and a sacrifice: A FRAGRANT AROMA TO GOD!***

[A]part from the way of life that imitates the life of God, our words about him are more like gossip than truth.

Philip Turner in First Things (October 1992). Christianity Today, Vol. 38, no. 13.

Talking when we should lay ourselves aside to listen; then we can speak fitting words of truth & grace:

Christians, especially ministers, so often think they must always contribute something when they are in the company of others, that this is the one service they have to render. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking.

Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are talking where they should be listening. But he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too. This is the beginning of the death of the spiritual life, and in the end there is nothing left but spiritual chatter.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), pages 97-8.