

purposefully putting on godly garments which reflect the fabric of God's holy, righteous character. Wow. What an interesting and helpful way to look at the concept and process of Christian maturity. I don't know about you, but it makes me wonder, "What clothes in my life need to go, and which clothes need to replace them?"

Thankfully, Paul doesn't disappoint us, for in verses 25-31 he identifies numerous garments which might qualify for the show *What Not To Wear*. As we work our way down through this list, you need to ask yourself a pointed question, or two: "Lord, am I wearing any of the godless garments Paul mentions, garments which are stunting my spiritual progress?" And while you are thinking about the answer to that query, make sure you have the main idea of this passage firmly in your mind.

Grow Up By Trading Old Clothes For New Clothes

What is the first garment which might need to be moth-balled in your life so you can move onward and upward?

Put Off The Garment of Lies & Put On The Garment Of Truth (Eph. 4:25)

The Rule Declared. Listen to Paul's words carefully:

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

The opening word "*therefore*," introduces us grammatically to a slight change in Paul's argument. Here a transition is made from a general principle concerning walking with Christ to a specific list of how the general principle can be apprehended in one's life.

Another thing to note at the commencement of this new practical section is the method of Paul's teaching concerning what to put off and what to put on. He starts, for the most part, with a negative command, followed by a positive command, while concluding with a reason for the words. You will discover this pedagogical method in verses 25, 28, 29, and 30. Verse 26 deviates from the method in so far as it begins with a positive command, followed by a negative, culminating in a reason. And verse 32, for the sake of grammatical specificity, contains a negative command, followed by a positive, while leaving a reason off. Structurally, this is how the passage is arranged, but don't lose sight of Paul's purpose while reflecting on this. Regardless of what type of command comes first, the apostle has but one thing in mind: *He desires for us to head toward maturity by making some radical changes in our clothing.*

One other thing I would like to point out is the importance of the present tense used for the commands. Using the present tense with a negative in Greek serves to prohibit an action in progress. Hence, Paul isn't saying, "Don't think about doing these sinful things." On the contrary, he's strongly stating, "Stop participating in the sin I am going to talk about."

It's most interesting that lying is the first garment Paul identifies. Why did he start here? Was not a lie the first thing the Devil did in the Garden (Gen. 3)? Is not lying hardwired into our bodies from the beginning? Really, nobody ever sits down with a toddler and gives them lessons on deception and falsehood. That kind of activity comes with the sinful packaging and it is something which comes all too easily to us. Just put us in the right situation and out comes a lie. You know the drill. Jack Nicholson's character in *Something's Gotta Give* knew the

drill. When Diane Keaton caught Jack's character, whom she loved, with another woman on a date at a restaurant, he chased her out of the facility and exclaimed, "I have never lied to you, I have always told you some version of the truth." She replied, "Truth doesn't have versions, okay?" She couldn't have been more right. Truth is all about truth, but our sinful bent tends to twist truth.

When you became a believer you were brought into the family of the One who is known as "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). He now calls you to speak the truth, but, at times, you shave the truth. Why do you continue to wear this carnal clothing?

- To deceive others in order to give them a false imagine about the real you.
- To keep people from knowing the real you.
- To stay in the good graces of others.
- To avoid a confrontation.
- To keep other Christians out of your private life, which is compromised.
- To protect a hidden sin you enjoy.
- To have your cake and eat it to in a marriage relationship.
- To keep people from finding out what you are doing in a certain area of your life.
- To blame someone else, instead of accepting blame.
- To make other Christians think you are more mature than you really are.
- To make other Christians to think more highly of you than they should.
- To keep a counselor off-balance.
- To pit people you don't really like against each other.
- To make one person look good and another bad.
- To save face in a given situation.
- To protect others from the truth as we see it.
- To build and inflate our low self-esteem so we feel better about ourselves.
- To, well, I'm sure you can fill in the proverbial blank.

What is your excuse for wearing this tattered, useless garment? In the last part of the verse, Paul teaches us why we, as growing Christians, need to drop this garment and replace it with truth telling.

The Rule Detailed (Eph. 4:25b). Here Paul tells us why this godless garment has got to be thrown in the trash bin.

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, **Speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.**

If anything, we should be known as truth-tellers. Why? Because, and most importantly, we are members of the body of Christ. Lies destroy fellowship. Truth builds fellowship. Lies obliterate relationships. Truth establishes relationship. Lies kill joy. Truth gives birth to joy. Lies mangle trust. Truth builds trust, and with trust comes everything needed to build up the local body of Christ.

Concerning what lying does to a church body, we'd do well to listen to the late Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones, who wisely observed in his commentary on Ephesians:

"Think of it like this: How can there be fellowship if there is lying? It is the exact opposite to true fellowship, is it not? What makes fellowship possible is trust, mutual trust, mutual reliance, a feeling that you can trust one another, and therefore you can speak, and speak freely and openly, one to another. But the moment the element of lying comes in, fellowship is destroyed: you are no longer free; you do not know how much you can believe, or what you can believe; you do not know how much you can trust the other person. And if fellowship is broken, you are in a kind of police state in which everybody is spying on everybody else. You say, I wonder whether so and so really means that; I wonder whether that is really true. In this way fellowship is destroyed. Lying is destructive of fellowship. And what happens to us as Christians is not so much and not only what we are saved individually; we are all saved and made members together of the body of Christ; we are like a building that is being constructed as a habitation of God; we are all individual stones in that wonderful building; but it is the unity of the building that matters. Lying makes unity impossible, for it cuts at the very root of the whole doctrine of the Christian church at its most essential point"¹

Profound words from a pious man, wouldn't you agree? Here was a pastor, a master shepherd/teacher who knew firsthand what lies do in the house of God. They destroy unity every time! Show me a local church with great unity, and I'll show you a group of believers who are open, authentic, and transparent. BCC is this kind of church and it's all related to the mature saints here who are committed to trading telling lies for telling the truth. This is our DNA, and if you struggle in this area, then we will challenge you to grow in this area while you are with us. Not only will it benefit the body of Christ, it will bring true life and peace to all of your relationships, whether you are married or single. So, go ahead. Pick up the garment called truth-telling. You will be glad you did, and so will all those in your life.

Another garment is equally important. We encounter it in verses 26-27.

Put Off The Garment Of Unjustified Anger & Put On The Garment Of Justified Anger (Eph. 4:26-27)

Yes, your eyes are not playing tricks on you, nor are your ears. Where does this seemingly inconsistent command come from? Ephesians 4, verses 26-27.

²⁶ Be angry, . . . (Eph. 4:26).

Wow. What a pair of divinely inspired verses. Let's dissect them in our quest to grow up in Christ.

The Rule Declared (Eph. 4:26a). Hard to believe, but the Lord commands Christians here to be angry. He even uses a present tense verbal command to underline its perpetual nature. This, of course, is not anger for anger's sake we see this much in the following phrase, "and yet do not sin." From reading and studying the Bible we quickly learn there are two forms of anger: justified and unjustified.

¹Martyn-Lloyd Jones, *Darkness and Light: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:17-5:17* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 222-223.

God always evidences the justified type because it is related to His holiness. You cannot read through the OT and not see there are times when God is, in fact, angry. Here are a few texts to trip your memory. Speaking of those who would disobey the Mosaic Covenant, God booms:

The LORD shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven" (Deut. 29:20).

Then Israel forsook God and served Baal we read these words:

And the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies" (Jud. 2:14).

There were times in OT history when God became justifiably angry.

- His anger burned toward those who transgressed or watered down His laws.
- His anger burned toward those who rejected the words of His prophets and priests.
- His anger burned toward those who modified His laws for their own selfish purposes.
- His anger burned toward those who dared to take advantage of the poor and the widows.
- His anger burned toward those who brought godless items into holy places.
- His anger burned toward those who perverted justice, who gave false testimony, and who lied and deceived to get ahead of others.
- His anger burned toward those who did not follow His commands to the letter.

I'm sure you get the point. Because God is holy then anything short of holiness arouses His righteous anger.

The same should be true in the life of maturing believer. Unrighteousness and godlessness should move them to being spiritually upset and bothered. Does the evil around you cause you angst? Anymore I think the relativistic nature our country, with its constant drumbeat to embrace open mindedness regarding anything and everything, is causing saints from being emotionally charged about outright evil masquerading as righteousness. If you are growing up in Christ, what angers Him will, by default, anger you. Does it?

The Rule Detailed (Eph. 4:26-27). Lest believers misunderstand and misuse what he just commanded, Paul turns and adds some much needed clarification:

²⁶ Be angry, and *yet* do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity (Eph. 4:26-27).

Regarding anger, the wise apostle lays down two checks.

One, Paul advises us not to sin in our anger. What does this mean? Anger is sin when it is unjustified and not concerned with godly things. Is your anger wrong or right? Would Christ approve of it? Really?

Two, anger becomes sin when you permit it to fester in your heart, when you allow it to smolder just below the surface of your life, and when you fail to revolve it by dealing with it before the day is over. Interestingly enough, Paul's second word here for anger is different from the first. The first word is *orgizesthe* (ὀργίζεσθε). The second is *parorgismos* (παροργισμός), which is the Greek for a perpetual state of anger.² It pragmatically denotes a person who lives in a state of anger, who is testy and easily provoked. They are like the hair trigger on a mouse trap. Give them a reason, or sometimes no reason, and *wham* they explode all over you. They explode because they internally live in a state of being upset.

Waiting once to tee off the ninth hole of a golf course over a large river, we had to stop and wait for another golfer with a push cart to walk across a bridge near us. As we waited, I would hear the big man cussing and yelling as he walked, and there wasn't anyone with him either. And without any hesitation, he took his cart and shoved it hard to it rolled down the steep bank into the river. Of course, he continued to cuss and yell as the cart and clubs rolled into oblivion.

Standing there in shock, I'll never forget the words of the man perched on the lawnmower next to us, "Can you believe it? And to think that that man is a pastor of a local church, and it is not the first time he has acted like that either." "What a bad witness," I thought. Here was a saint full of *parorgismos*. Such is not the type of anger which should describe a saint for it is focused on all the wrong things and it is driven by the wrong inner motivation.

How does a saint interested in maturity deal with the godless form of anger? They keep short accounts . . . or they don't play golf. They don't let a day end without having that much needed and honest conversation to clear the air, as it were. They send an email to someone they've been anger with for far too long. They make that tough phone call to say they are sorry. They waste no time coming clean of their godless anger with their wife, their husband, or their children.

How do you come clean? You resolve this day to take off this godless garment and put on a garment which evidences God's heart.

If you don't take off this godless garment, what are the consequences? The answer to that question is Paul's third check:

²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity (Eph. 4:26-27).

When you fail to address your anger issue with God, when you let it smolder and burn in your life for weeks and months, maybe even years, you allow the old Devil to get his hoof in the door of your life. And once his hoof is inside the door, he'll work overtime on destroying you and every relationship in your life by ramping up the anger in your life.

²Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 780.

For those saints really interested in growing up in Jesus, I'd say it is time to slam the door on the Devil's hoof. It's time to stop giving him an opportunity to destroy your lives and the lives around you with a godless form of anger. Got anyone ready and willing to slam that door right now? Do and not only will you find peace, you'll also grow in your relationship with Jesus.

Another change of spiritual clothing surfaces in verse 28.

Put Off The Garment Of Takin' & Put On The Garment Of Workin' (Eph. 4:28)

Paul hits some saints close to home with this laser guided word:

Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have *something* to share with him who has need (Eph. 4:28).

As you adjust your tie, or shift in your seat, I'd counsel you to realize the two-fold structure of this practical command.

The Rule Declared (Eph. 4:28a). This first point is what we would call the rule or the command. As with the other verses in the immediate context, Paul is giving Christians a definite command to obey. And as with the other commands, this one, too, specifically in the original language forbids an action already in progress, the present tense imperative wedded to the negative shows us this much (ὁ κλέπτων μηκέτι κλεπτέτω). As I've said before, Paul could have used another grammatical construction which forbids one to engage in an action which hasn't transpired yet. But that wouldn't have fit the situation for the saints in Ephesus, who, as saints are prone to, were already daily engaged in the sins detailed here.

What was the sin? Anyone can see it. Some of these saints enjoyed stealing. Interestingly enough, the word which is used here for stealing is *klepto*, from which we get our English word *kleptomaniac*, which denotes "an abnormal, persistent impulse or tendency to steal, not prompted by need."³ And as we would expect, this is a present tense participle, much like our English gerund (which is a word which ends with "ing," like running, laughing, etc.), and it is combined with a negative thereby showing us that this was a lifestyle for some saints. Imagine that, and we thought stealing was a problem in modern times.

Listen to Dr. William Barclay's summation about ancient Grecian times:

"The man who was a thief must become an honest workman. This was necessary advice for in the ancient world thievery was rampant. It was very common in two places, at the docks and above all in the public baths. The public baths were the clubs of the time; and stealing the belongings of the bathers was one of the commonest crimes in any Greek city" ⁴

Thievery was rampant. Did you catch that? Nothing has changed in the last 2,000 years has it? I would venture to say that thievery has probably grown even more pervasive, wouldn't you agree?

³New World Dictionary, 778.

⁴Barclay, William. *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, The New Daily Study Bible, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 158.

Knowing the church in Paul's day, and knowing the nature of man's heart in our day, I know not much has changed. Hence, I must ask you to take a long look at yourself and answer this query: "Am I a thief?" "Am I guilty of taking something which I didn't work for and which isn't mine?" "Have I knowingly lifted something which belonged to someone else, thinking they owed it to me or that it wouldn't be noticed?" Here are some more probing questions to help you see if this godless garment is on your spiritual body:

- Do you steal from Costco by ordering a water and then filling the small cup up with Diet Coke?
- Do you plagiarize by downloading papers off the internet and calling them yours?
- Do you steal from the IRS by not telling them about all of your earnings in a given year?
- Do you steal by copying music which isn't yours?
- Do you steal by not telling a clerk they undercharged you and you know it?
- Do you steal by never giving back things loaned to you? Maybe you've got tools sitting in your garage which aren't yours, tools which you've had for years. Or maybe it's a dress, or some jewelry, or a pot or a book or the like. Sure, you've been meaning to give them back, but you just haven't got around to it. Isn't this a type of stealing?
- Do you steal by failing to pay back money you owe to others, whether it is to a company like Macy's or a friend inside or outside this church? If someone loaned you \$2,500 a couple of years ago, and you've only paid them a paltry \$400, then you are nothing more than a thief!
- Have you failed to pay back money you borrowed from a family member when you were in a real financial bind?
- Have you failed to follow through on a pledge you made to a church. At my church plant in California a wealthy young man approached me after a service one Sunday. He said, "Pastor, I've owned a nice home in the Bay Area for many years, and it has appreciated greatly. I'm in the processes of moving my family to another coastal city and I will be selling this property. I will take the proceeds, which should be several thousand dollars and donate it to this church." He moved and we never saw the pledge.
- Do you steal time from your employer? How so? Easy. Just drag your feet at work and fail to really produce for your employer. I've worked with a lot of people like this. They do as little as possible and what they do a snail could burn circles around them. Such lackluster performance is nothing more than stealing. It's also easy to steal time from an employer by spending more time visiting with other workers or by talking with non-business related people on the phone. How about online video games? Are you stealing time from your employer by playing several competitive video games per shift?
- Do you steal from your parents by taking a few bucks here and there, while they are none the wiser?
- Do you steal from God by not giving to Him from your earnings as you know you should?

So step back and look at yourself for a moment. You say, "I'm no thief. I would never dream of stealing." Maybe you wouldn't walk into *Lord & Taylor* and stuff a leather wallet in your purse, but you do steal in some of these more subtle, more slippery ways. What should you do in these and other situations? What should you do if stealing is a dirty piece of clothing you are wearing? Start taking the godless garment off by confessing your sin to the Lord (1 John 1:9). Next tell somebody close to you, somebody you can trust. Being accountable will make you more leery of stealing, for if there's anything a thief doesn't want its publicity. Then have certain godly people begin to pray for you and with you. Have them hold you up in prayer asking God to make you content with what you have, giving you the power to overcome the urge to take what isn't yours. And be honest why you steal. In Proverbs 9:17 Solomon rightly observes:

Stolen water is sweet; and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

It is exciting to take something which isn't yours, there's a sense of adventure about it, there's a rush knowing you got away with something. However, listen to the rest of the verse:

But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

Translated: Stealing has the stench of hell about it!

The rule is clear, isn't it: "*Let him who steals steal no longer.*" If this applies to you, be obedient to it. Stop stealing! What should you start doing instead? This is indicated in the positive side of the rule: "...*but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good...*"

Interestingly enough, the word Paul employs here for work denotes heavy, pore-purging, taxing labor. It's the word *kopiao* (κοπιῶω) and was used frequently in ancient times with reference to the training of athletes. Paul uses it this way in places like Philippians 2:16:

"...holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain."

As a former athlete I know what *toil* means. It means doing drills over and over again until you get them right. It means dogged commitment to the team. It means pushing your body beyond what you think it is physically capable of doing. It means perspiring, aching, hurting, grunting, and all that stuff. *Toil* is what separates the winning teams from the losing teams. It's what makes one basketball player outshine or out-manuever another.

Do you know what it means to toil, to work hard? Paul did. When he left the Ephesians for the last time, he closed with these parting words:

"I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by **working hard** in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:33-35).

Working hard is the same word used by Paul in Ephesians 4:28. All the Ephesians knew Paul wasn't afraid of doing a hard day's work. They had seen him on many occasions with their own eyes. Hence, his words here to them later are most powerful because behind them stood his personal

testimony. Working hard is what he was known for, and he wanted to see this in their lives as well for this is what a Christian's call is in this life.

You can see how important work was to Paul in other passages like 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12:

“For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread” (2 Thess. 3:10-12).

Tough, but true words. Paul hated to see lazy Christians because their life ran counter to everything Christianity is supposed to be. All of this might be making you a bit uncomfortable, but that's good really, I'd say that is the Holy Spirit talking with you. As maturing believers in the Lord Jesus, we, of all people, should be known as workers who set the pace. Do you? Or do you purposefully slow down the pace? From what Paul says, it's time to pick the pace up.

The Reason Detailed (Eph. 4:28b). See that little phrase “in order to”? It is one word in Greek, *hina* (ἵνα), and it grammatically denotes the purpose of the command. Why be known as a worker? Simple: “... in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.” That's it.

Again, I would caution you this concept runs counter to cultural thinking. Daily we are drilled to work to have money to buy more stuff for yourself. Now it's perfectly fine to work and save your money. This is, indeed, a biblical lifestyle; however, if this is all you do then you sin. Remember the principle of Paul: *Work in order to give to those in need.* That's why I work. That's why you work. We are supposed to be working so we can have funds to help the less fortunate.

Let me ask you a couple of pointed questions: Do you really believe that? If not, ask the Lord to help you get your life in line with His Word. Second, when's the last time you actually reached into your pocket and helped someone in need? Helping suggests, of course, that you know people enough to know when you might be of some assistance. When's the last time you stepped up to the plate and said, ‘Here, brother, let me help you with that bill.’ “Let me help you get that bike for your son.” “Let me help you get your car fixed.” When's the last time you caught these words going out of your mouth? If it has been too long, then now's the time to set the record straight.

In case this verse doesn't do it for you, let me read you a few more:

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

That was Jesus talking. Now hear Paul:

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share (1 Tim. 6:17-18).

Interesting, isn't it? We are called to work not so we can *get* but so we can *give*. Are you a generous giver? It's a sign of a growing disciple of Jesus.

Put Off The Garment Of Vile Talkin' & Put On The Garment Of Virtuous Talkin' (Eph. 4:29).

Paul, once again, like a skilled teacher, methodically addresses the next garment which might need to go in your life so you can mature in the faith. His two-fold approach enables us to quickly grasp the import of his words.

The Rule Declared (Eph. 4:29a). This command will make you want to loosen your tie and take a deep breath:

²⁹ Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth,

Unwholesome is from the Greek word *sapros* (σαπρός), which literally denoted something that was completely spoiled and/or rotten, like rotten fish.⁵ If you know what rotten fish smells like, then you understand what *sapros* means. It's an utterly offensive and detestable smell. Applied to speech the term, therefore, historically denoted talking which is morally objectionable, unwholesome, and harmful to the recipient. Ostensibly, *sapros* covers a wide array of unwholesome, odious speech. Like what? Let's isolate some of those areas by asking some pointed questions:

- Do you use cuss words to cut others down, to express you inner thinking and feelings? That's *sapros*.
- Do you mock and put down the less fortunate? That's *sapros*.
- Do you live to put others down who are not as gifted/skilled/intellectual as you are? That's *sapros*.
- Are the first words out of your mouth negative in any given situation? That's *sapros*.
- Are you negative toward others, toward your wife/husband/children/friends . . . you can fill in the blank. That is *sapros*.
- Do you think it is a spiritual gift to point out the weaknesses of others? That's *sapros*.
- Do you employ the use of double entendre to convert something benign into something risqué for the sake of a sick joke? That is *sapros*.
- Are the first words out of your mouth cutting, degrading, and demoralizing? That is *sapros*.

According to Paul, unwholesome talk has no place in the life of maturing saint. Why? Because, according to Jesus, it not only shows what is in your heart but it defiles you:

Hear, and understand. Not what enters into the mouth defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man (Matt. 15:10-11).

⁵Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 913.

So what about it? Is *sapros* in your life? If so, then it is time to confess your sin and lay this godless garment at the feet of your Savior. What should you take up in its place? Paul wastes no time showing you in the latter part of the verse.

The Rule Detailed (Eph. 4:29b). With that one contrastive word “but,” *alla* (ἀλλά), which is the most radical adversative in Greek, Paul moves from the negative to the positive. Listen and learn if you desire to grow spiritually:

but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*,
so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Of course, the pivotal word here is *edification*. It is from the Greek *oikodomen* (οικοδομή), which was used in the construction trades to denote building a structure.⁶ Applied to speech the meaning should not be missed, by anyone. A maturing Christian is known for how their speech builds up people. To be near a maturing believe is to be near someone who will make you feel good, who will encourage you, who will focus on your strengths not your weaknesses, who won't knowingly put their verbal finger on a tender nerve in your life, and who will cause you to be happier and desirous of being holier. Again, I can't help but ask you? Are you wearing the garment called edifying speech? Are you really a verbal builder, or are you a verbal blaster? Our world is full of the latter types, isn't it? God wants His children to shine brightly in the surrounding darkness and one way we do this is by growing in how we talk to anybody and everybody. And how should we talk? The answer is best represented in the paraphrase of this verse from Peterson's *The Message*:

Watch the way you talk. Let nothing foul or dirty come out of your mouth. Say only what helps, each word a gift.⁷

Before you walk out of this worship center this morning, I think you know what you need to do. You need to lay garment of vile talking down once and for all, and determine to pick up the new garment called virtuous talking. Why? Because this is a major earmark of someone who's really maturing in their walk with God.

Growth. It's on God's mind where we are concerned all the time. Is it on your mind? It's on the mind of the leaders of this church. We are serious about all of us maturing in the faith, and that is why our entire ministry is crafted the way it is. Whether you are in a Tuesday morning ladies study, or heavily involved in Men's Ministry, these ministries are laser focused on helping you put off the old you so you can put on the new you. In light of what you've heard today, do we have anyone who needs to make a garment modification?

⁶Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 696.

⁷Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), Eph 4:29.