

Ephesians 4 (rev. 7/25/14)

Chapter 4 begins a lengthy admonition that extends to 6:20. As in Romans 12:1 and I Thessalonians 4:1, Paul uses the words "I entreat you" and "therefore" to signal a change to ethical issues based upon the theology he has just presented.

Verse 1 introduces the main topic - that of walking in a manner worthy of their calling - which chapters 1-3 had discussed in much detail. Verse 2 then gives some examples of what this means, namely, to have "humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love." Verses 4-6 offer a sevenfold confession of factors that unify believers.

4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

Based upon the magnificent salvation that the believer has received in Christ, he is admonished to live in accordance with his high destiny and calling. Since Paul had apostolic authority that he expected the Church to accept, he urges, rather than commands them to act.

Paul calls himself a "prisoner of the Lord", which is a confession of Christ's lordship over him. This reminds his readers of his own commitment to the life he is asking them to live and of the sacrifice that he has made on their behalf.

The exhortation "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" flows from the gracious and saving purposes of God. Although the believer is not called on the basis of his worthiness, once he has been called, he should respond with a proper walk. The believer's walk should cover every area of his life. This topic will be expanded upon in the verses that follow (cf. 2:1-2 where "walk" is used to describe the unbeliever's lifestyle; 4:17; 5:2, 8, and 15).

God has already worked in their lives - He has called them to a glorious salvation in Christ with many attendant blessings.

- the believer has been called to the blessings of salvation (1:3-14)
- he has a wonderful hope (1:18)

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- he has been exalted with Christ in His position as ruler over all creation (1:20-22; 2:6)
- he has become a member of a new creation - the church - consisting of both Jew and gentile (2:13-16)
- he has become a member of God's household, and the temple in which the living God dwells (2:15, 19, 21)
- he has free access to the Father (2:18)
- he is part of God's plan for the universe (3:10)

Yet all these blessings carry with them responsibility. The believer is to conform to a standard that God sets.

4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love,

Verse 2 tells the believer how he is to live "worthy of his calling", particularly in relation to the Christian community ("to one another"). He is to be humble, gentle, and patient. He is to bear with others in love. In the Church, it is the relationships among members that are crucial to maintain.

Grammatically, "humility" and "gentleness" are closely related, being connected by the preposition "with."

"**Humility**" or "lowliness" rarely appeared in Greek literature and when it did it was usually used in a derogatory sense (Best, 362) of weakness or shameful lowliness. In the Bible, however, it is used more than 250 times, often in the context of God humbling the proud or in contexts where God is exalting the lowly. In the NT, it was used of Paul's attitude when ministering (Acts 20:19) or of the attitude that Christians should demonstrate toward each other (Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:12; I Pet. 5:5). Most of all, it exemplified the action of Christ, who humbled Himself and took on the form of a bondservant (Phil. 2:6-11).

"**Gentleness**" or "meekness" in its adjectival form designate the poor or oppressed in the OT who, in their deep need for humility, sought help from the Lord (O'Brien, 277). "Meekness" sometimes carries the connotation of not being assertive or of being weak, so perhaps gentleness is a better English term (Best, 363). Gentleness was a characteristic of Jesus' rule; He

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fulfilled the role as the messianic king who brought salvation without the use of force (Matt. 21:5; cf. Zech. 9:9; O'Brien, 277). Paul exhorts Christians to follow Christ's example of meekness in I Corinthians 10:1. They are especially to be meek toward other Christians who have sinned (Gal. 6:1, 2; II Tim. 2:25 cf. II Cor. 4:21). Meekness is also a fruit of the Spirit.

Piper says, "Christian lowliness is a disposition to think lowly of ourselves and highly of Christ. Christian meekness is the demeanor of a person with this disposition." The person who is lowly is humbled because he sees himself in relationship to God. He sees no comparison between his knowledge or wisdom and that of an omniscient God. He recognizes he has no righteousness apart from what was given him in Christ. He is not puffed up by any ability he may excel in over other humans. Christian lowliness makes a person feel awkward receiving praise. This is the work of the Holy Spirit who opens our eyes to see the majesty of God's holiness and the minuteness of ourselves."

"Patience" is a word that appears in both the NT and OT and is used of God's patience toward His people. In like manner, His people need to demonstrate a similar attitude toward each other. "Patience' is that long suffering which makes allowance for others' shortcomings and endures wrong rather than flying into rage or desiring vengeance" (O'Brien, 278). Those who allow tension and bitterness to build do not have a patient spirit toward others.

"Showing forbearance" and **"being diligent"** function as commands, though they are participles. The first clarifies what it means to be patient. As believers bear with one another's sins, weaknesses, tensions and conflicts, they exhibit a lifestyle that is in harmony with their divine calling (O'Brien, 278). This can only be possible because God's love is the source, as the words "in love" make clear. Paul has just prayed in 3:17 that the believer be rooted and grounded in love, now he urges them to live accordingly.

Again, Piper helps to bring these characteristics to life. He says, "Lowliness is the prerequisite of patience. Haughty people are not patient. The more highly you think of yourself the more quickly you will think you should be served. 'Who do they think they are to keep me waiting like this!' But if you have a disposition of lowliness, it won't feel so inappropriate when

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you are not treated like a dignitary and when the fruits of your labors are slow in coming. If you have seen the majesty of God's holiness, you know your own minuteness and sinfulness, and you don't presume to deserve special treatment. And if you have seen the magnificence of God's grace, you know he will give you the strength to wait and will turn all your delays into strategic maneuvers of victory." (John Piper, Sermon on Ephesians 4:1-6).

4:3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The apostle has told his readers to exercise humility, gentleness, and patience, and to show forbearance in love to one another - all of which are necessary ingredients in maintaining the unity of the Spirit in their community life. These are not things that will simply occur naturally, the believers need to be "diligent" in their efforts. "Diligence" communicates a sense of urgency, or perhaps, even crisis to the matter.

Love for one another results in unity, but the unity that they keep among themselves is called the unity of the Spirit, for it is a unity that God's Spirit creates as a result of the work of Christ (2:11-22). It is through the Spirit that believers have equal access to God (2:18). It is this unity that is part of God's plan to bring all creation under subjection to Christ (1:9, 10). Since the Church is the example to the universe of God's masterpiece of unification (2:7), believers are expected to live consistently with God's purpose. "To keep this unity must mean to maintain it visibly. If the unity of the Spirit is real, it must be transparently evident, and believers have a responsibility before God to make sure that this is so. To live in a manner that mars the unity of the Spirit is to do despite to the gracious reconciling work of Christ. It is tantamount to saying that His sacrificial death by which relationships with God and others have been restored, along with the resulting freedom of access to the Father, are of no real consequence to us!" (O'Brien, 280).

The attitudes of humility, gentleness, etc. are Spirit generated. Yet believers are told to maintain them ("to maintain" indicates that unity already exists prior to the exhortation). People inevitably get on each other's nerves, as can be attested to by anyone who has ever been a member of a group (Best, 366). Peace is the bond that keeps the Church unified.

4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

4:5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

4:6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

In verses 4-6 Paul lists seven fundamentals that are the basis of Christian unity. These are the essentials that bind Christians together and it is by remembering all that we have in common that we "preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:3). In other words, when differences arise (and they inevitably will) we are to remember the unity that is already ours in Christ. This helps us to think transcendentally, above the differences that may arise among us.

Ordinarily, when the members of the Trinity are listed, it is done so in the order of Father, Son, and Spirit. Here, the Spirit comes first, since He is tied to the previous discussion of maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. "One body" is mentioned before them all, since this is the main concern of Paul in his discussion (cf. 2:16; Col. 3:15; Ro. 12:5).

The body that Paul is speaking of is the Church, Christ's body that is composed of Jews and Gentiles. The Spirit gives life and cohesion to the Church (I Cor. 12:1; cf. Rom. 8:9).

The believer is also called in one hope of his calling. The idea of calling relates back to verse 1, where believers are exhorted to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. Paul, however, focuses on the hope that comes from being called. Apart from Christ, the world has no hope (Eph. 2:12). Their hope comes with the message of the Gospel (Col. 1:23) which promises the salvation of the sinner from the judgment of God and the expectation of sharing in Christ's glory when it is revealed (Col. 3:4). In Ephesians, the believer's hope is in participating in God's purpose of summing all things up in Christ (1:9, 10).

The second triad begins with the words "one Lord." "Lord" was the title of YHWH in the OT and was used of Jesus in the NT. Paul is convinced of this because of Christ's resurrection and exaltation (I Cor. 8:6; 12:3; Ro.

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10:9; 14:8, 9; Phil. 2:9-11). Christ is the Lord who is present among His people (Rev. 2-3), the One who purchased them (I Pet. 1:18-19), and the One who is in a position of honor and glory of all things. It is appropriate for Ephesians where Jesus is presented as the Lord of all (Eph. 1:22) and the One in whom all creation will find its end.

Next, the expression "one faith" appears. "One faith" probably speaks of objective faith - the body of truth that Christians believe (Jude 3; Ro. 1:5; Gal. 3:23ff, Col. 1:23; 2:7; I Tim. 3:9; 4:1, 6) - rather than the subjective act of believing.

There is also only "one baptism." Baptism is an outward identification with Christ. Those who have been baptized are said to have been put into Christ (Gal. 3:27). This is also connected with the idea of unity (Gal. 3:27-28; I Cor. 12:13). Although it is not clear whether Paul is speaking of water baptism or Spirit baptism, these ideas were not as remotely separated as they are in the modern church. Water baptism was assumed of every true believer. The early church could not conceive of a person who claimed to be a Christian but refused to be baptized. Water baptism symbolized the spiritual union with Him, apart from which the symbolism had no meaning.

Paul ends by proclaiming that there is one God to whom he ascribes praise for His universal rule (See O'Brien, 284-284 for a discussion as to whether "all" is masculine and refers to all people, or neuter referring to all things). God is the ruler of all creation and His purposes are to unify all things in Christ. The unity of the Church is the means by which God is proclaiming to the world that He is at work accomplishing His desired end. They are a picture of the final goal.

4:7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Paul has been speaking of unity. His attention now shifts (*δέ* - *de* - "but" signals the beginning of a new section -Best, 375) to the diversity found among believers as a result of Christ's distribution of grace.

God has graced each one of us with a gift that is designed to contribute to the whole to bring about maturity. The theocentricity of God

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and Christ continues. He is the one who gives and believers receive only because of His grace. The gifts are not only distributed to certain special individuals, but to "each one" in the body of Christ.

Within the body of Christ each person has a specific role or function that he is to fulfill. The ability to fulfill his role is due to the grace given by Christ to each one of them. The measure of God's grace given to each person is God's sovereign choice. In I Corinthians 12:11, it is the Holy Spirit that allocates gifts, and in Romans 12:3, God is said to measure out degrees of faith. Paul saw his own ministry as grace given (Eph. 3:2, 7, 8).

4:8 Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men."

Verse 8 is a quote from Psalm 68:18. In the context of Psalm 68, God is pictured as ascending Mt. Sinai with freed captives in His train. The picture is of God leading His people in a triumphal procession up the temple mount.

Paul applies the picture to Christ, not in a vague analogy between the two events, but rather because he saw Jesus' exaltation as a further fulfillment of the triumph of God (O'Brien, 289). "Knowing that Psalm 68:18 was itself referring to earlier Scripture (Num. 8:8-19, 18:6) and that the Lord's *receiving gifts*, that is chosen individuals, from among the people was for the purpose of *giving* them back to His people for ministry, Paul cites the Psalm using the verb 'gave' in an explanatory way, and places the emphasis on the persons given back ('gifts,' verses 8, 11) and the ministries they are to fulfill (vv. 11-16)" (O'Brien, 293).

Of course, the above suggestion is not without problems but it is perhaps one of the most plausible explanations for this difficult verse.

4:9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?

4:10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

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After quoting Psalm 68, Paul selects two verbs ("ascended" and "gave") to emphasize Christ's ascension and bestowal of gifts on His people. Originally, "ascend" was used of God majestically ascending Zion (Ps. 68). Here, it is applied to Christ's ascension (cf. 1:20-21). In 1:20-21, the Father exalted Christ; here, Jesus ascends under His own power.

The real difficulty of this verse is what is meant by "He had descended into the lower parts of the earth."

Three main views are held:

- (1) that Christ descended into Hades after he had died on the cross,
- (2) that Christ descended from heaven at His incarnation (Phil. 2)
- (3) that Christ ascended into heaven and then descended in the Spirit.

The first view is widely held and many associate it with I Peter 3:19 (He went and preached to the spirits in prison). Those who hold this view point out that Jesus didn't simply descend to the earth, but to *the lower parts* of the earth. Furthermore, the starting point for Paul's comments appears to be from the earth, not heaven. Jesus' ascension began from the earth so it follows that when He speaks of descending, the earth is his reference point as well.

But Ephesians has no clear reference to Hell. The contrast is between ascending to heaven and descending to "the lower parts of the earth" which can be better interpreted as "the earth below", rather than as "the place of the dead". This also corresponds with Paul's previous description of all things as "heaven and earth" (1:10; 3:15).

The second view may have more to offer. Namely, that Christ descended in His incarnation to the earth and died on the cross. The order follows Psalm 68 where God descends to fight for and rescue His people before He ascends to His dwelling place. This is also found in John 3:12; 6:62 cf. 6:33, 38, 50-51; 20:17 and Philipians 2:6-11. Paul may actually have had in mind humiliation and exultation rather than mere physical movement from one place to another (O'Brien, 295).

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The third view takes the descent of Christ as occurring in the Spirit at Pentecost after His ascension into heaven. However, this view has little to commend it, especially because it is hard to imagine the coming of the Spirit being called the "descent of Christ".

Paul's purpose is simply to say that the ascended Christ is now in a place of ultimate supremacy, a place where He exercises His sovereignty in giving gifts to men. He sets out to accomplish His goal of filling all things by supplying His people with all that is necessary to bring about their maturity (vv. 11 ff.).

4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

Since Christ has ascended to a place of authority, He is beginning to exercise this right through the Church. The creation of the Church is linked to His intention of filling the universe with His rule and is the instrument for carrying out His purposes for the cosmos (O'Brien, 297).

The gifts He gives to the church are *people*, not *ministries*, given by the Spirit (contrast I Cor. 12-14). There are four or five categories of gifted individuals, depending on how the grammar is interpreted (i.e. grammatically, pastors and teachers could be considered as the same person or as two different people. For the meaning of each of these terms, see my related notes).

4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

Christ's purpose for giving these gifted men to the church is listed in the three prepositional phrases that follow, namely, "for the equipping of the saints," "for the work of service," and "to the building up of the body of Christ."

The relationship of these phrases to each other is debated. Some see "for the work of service" and "to the building up of the body of Christ" as describing what these gifted people equip the believer for. Others see all three prepositional phrases as co-ordinate and dependent; that is, the work

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of these gifted people is described by all three prepositional phrases - they equip others, serve, and build the body. But there appears to be a switch from the gifted people mentioned in 11, to all the saints in verse 12a, which supports the first view better. In other words, Paul is probably saying that the work of these gifted men is to equip the saints to enable them to minister and build the body of Christ (see O'Brien, 303 for a detailed discussion).

"Equip" is a noun in Greek and only appears here in the NT. The related verb is found often and has several meanings; "repairing" (Matt. 4:19; Mk. 1:19) "equipping, preparing, completing, training, disciplining." "The notion of equipping or preparing, in the sense of making someone adequate or sufficient for something, best suits the context" (O'Brien, 303). That for which they are made adequate is the work of the ministry. The gifted individuals are given by Christ to prepare others to be adequate at serving each other and, by doing so, serving the Lord (I Cor. 12:5; 16:1; Ro. 12:7).

The service that believers render to each other is for the building of the body of Christ so that both the gifted individuals of verse 11 and the other members work together to achieve the same goal. "For building the body of Christ" denotes the activity of building and incorporates the concept of growth. "Building", when used literally, signifies the construction of houses, temples and other structures, but can also be used figuratively, as it is here, to denote the building of people (Jer. 24:6; 31:4; 33:7; Matt. 16:18). The Church is built in numbers through the ministry of the apostles and evangelists and into a cohesive organism through serving each other.

4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Verse 13 tells us the final goal to which the process of the building of the church leads. The building takes place until we all attain the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. Both the leaders and the "saints" in general are working together to reach this end and they are to keep serving *until* they get there.

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The verb "attain" means to arrive at a particular state and focuses on the end. "Significantly, Christian growth or progress does not occur in isolation, for Paul's language here envisages God's people collectively (we all) as en route to this vital destination" (O'Brien, 305).

This final goal is first described as "the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God." In 2:11-22 Christ brought unity to the church which believers are encouraged to maintain (4:3). Now Paul speaks of unity as something not yet attained - once again revealing the tension between the "now" and "not yet" aspects of salvation mentioned throughout these notes. This unity needs to be worked on by all but will only reach perfection when Christ comes and brings people to complete maturity. "The faith," as in verse 5, is the objective body of truth that Christians believe, not the activity of believing (subjective faith). This is further described as the knowledge of the Son of God.

Although the saving purposes of God and the mystery of Christ have already been revealed to the readers (1:9-10; 3:3-10), Paul had prayed that they may know their hope and their inheritance (1:17-19; 3:16-19). Though they "knew," they didn't really know all that they had in Christ. In the same way, they had knowledge of Christ, but they also needed to attain it. Like "faith", this knowledge is objective, meaning that Paul is not speaking of experiential knowledge about Christ, but factual knowledge of who He is.

The second objective is to become a mature man. This is not speaking of individuals becoming mature, but of the body as a whole reaching maturity. The term "man" is somewhat unusual since it is specifically used of a male and not as a general designation for human. The focus is on a mature adult as opposed to an infant (4:14) who is immature and unstable.

The third expression defines what Paul is saying most specifically; the Church is to work together until it attains the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. The Church is already the fullness of Christ (1:23, cf. 4:10) but there is a sense in which it must become realized. The maturity spoken of is measured by Christ Himself. He is the standard that the Church is working toward and it should not be content until it reaches this end.

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4:14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

The final goal of the Church is stated in verse 13. Verse 14 gives the immediate goal. As the Church matures, it will no longer be like a child. The gifted men that Christ gives to the Church are to bring stability to it. Their ministry helps the Church resist the forces that could corrupt or destroy it.

The immaturity is described as "tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine". That is, the going back and forth with every prevailing wind like a small rudderless boat. The "wind" is specifically false doctrine, or false teaching. Different philosophies have led some to vacillate in what they really believe, undermining the Gospel and the apostle's teaching. The "children" are unable to come to settled convictions.

The "trickery of men" is the mechanism used by false teachers to manipulate the believers. The false teaching which destroys the unity of the Church is not accidental but has been created by cunning minds. "Trickery" was a word literally used literally for dice-playing and used metaphorically of to refer to the trickery that results from craftiness (O'Brien, 309). The second phrase "by craftiness" intensifies the meaning of the first. It literally means "a readiness to do anything."

The importance of sending gifted men such as apostles to the Church becomes even greater when one becomes cognizant of the dangers faced by the body of Christ.)

4:15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ,

Paul moves to the ultimate goal of the Church - that the people grow up in all aspects into Christ, who is the Church's head. They will grow when they speak the truth to one another in love. Instead of crafty scheming, they are to act in love. Instead of false teaching, they are to speak the truth. The Christian life and service takes place under the umbrella of love.

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Believers are expected to grow in faith (II Cor. 10:5; II Thess. 1:3) and in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10). Here, Paul encourages them to grow in every way.

"The growth of the body has Christ as its goal; He's the one into whom we are to grow" (O'Brien, 312). Together, believers become more like Christ until they are fully incorporated into Him. Since Christ is the Head, He decides where the body should go and what it should do. He rules over it.

4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Verse 16 summarizes the whole paragraph. The body is composed of individual parts, yet they are fitted and held together to form a unified whole. The body grows when each person works in the context of love.

Paul is speaking of the need for the Church to grow as a whole (the whole body building itself up in love), not the growth of the individual, though that too is necessary. Each individual contributes to this by doing his part. The individuals are joined together by "ligaments" that empower each part. The ligaments could be a reference to the special ministers first spoken of in 4:11 or could be referring to believers in general. If it is the former, then Paul would be emphasizing that the special servants sent by Christ to the Church and the individuals work together to cause the growth of the body, each contributing to it through the gifts given to them by Christ.

The Church is to build itself up in love. Every person is involved in the process. Love is the criterion to assess the Church's true growth (I Cor. 13).

SUMMARY: Ephesians 4:1-16 emphasizes the two aspects of the Church: the unity that they share and the urgency in preserving it, as well as the diversity that exists which contributes to its growth. In order for this to take place, God has given gifted people to help the Church reach the ultimate goal of growing up in all aspects into Christ.

4:17 This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,

Ephesians 4:1-16 has set the stage for the remainder of the book. What follows explains in detail how to walk in a manner worthy of the calling and how to preserve unity (4:1-3). The focus in verse 17 is once again upon the Christian's walk in contrast to outsiders.

In the next three paragraphs (4:17-24; 4:25-5:2; 5:3-14), there is a progression from the negative to the positive aspects in the Christian life.

Paul urges the believer to refrain from falling back into the lifestyle that he had when he was without Christ. Paul's exhortation is urgent and authoritative. He not only tells believers how to live, he insists on it in the Lord, drawing the divine source of authority into play.

"To testify [i.e. "to affirm"- NAS], in this case, is solemnly to enjoin, as a man does who calls upon God to bear witness to the truth and importance of what he says. *Μαρτυρέω* is to act as a witness, and *μαρτύρομαι* to invoke as a witness. The latter is the word here used. "In the Lord" means in communion with the Lord. Paul speaks as one who had access to the mind of Christ, knew his will, and could therefore speak in his name." (Hodge, Commentary, 248).

The readers were converted as Gentiles and are addressed as such (cf. 3:1; 2:11). They are also living in a Gentile environment. Although they once lived as unbelievers isolated from God and His promises (2:1-3, 11-12), they are no longer in that position (2:6, 15). They are to live up to the position in which they have been placed.

First, the believer is to lay aside the mindset that is so stained by futility they easily fall prey to foolish desires. In the OT, the word "futility" was often used in relation to idolatry and the emptiness of human endeavors that bring no lasting satisfaction (Isa. 28:29:30:15; 33:11; Ecc. 1:2, 14; 2:1, 11, 15, 17, etc.). The unbeliever's mind has departed from reality and is left to fumble with trivial pleasures and pursuits that lead nowhere.

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4:18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

"This verse at once explains and confirms the preceding statement. The heathen walk in vanity, i. e. in intellectual and moral darkness, because their understanding is darkened, and because they are alienated from the life of God" (Hodge, Commentary, 249).

They are *darkened in their understanding*. There is a "perceptive and mental dimension in the human estrangement from God" (O'Brien, 320). Because they are darkened in their understanding, they are blind to the truth (note Paul's desire for the believers to gain understanding of God in Eph. 1:17 ff; 3:18, 19). Paul says they are alienated from God *because of the ignorance that is within them*. This darkness is not a temporary condition that comes and goes, it is an abiding permanent state. The perfect passive participle in Greek translated as "[they are] darkened" is a state of being in which they are incapable of knowing truth. This is akin to Romans 1:21 where Paul, in speaking of the unbeliever, states "their foolish hearts were darkened."

Not only were unbelievers in mental darkness, they were also separated from the life of God (cf. 2:1, 5, 12). "'Alienated from the life of God,' means strangers to that life. 'The life of God,' means the life of which God is the author. It is spiritual life. That is, the life of which the indwelling Spirit is the principle or source." (Hodge, Commentary, 249).

Their failure to receive life was due to the ignorance that was in them. "Paul's view of knowledge and ignorance is largely determined by the Old Testament. To know God means to be in a close personal relationship with Him. Knowledge has to do with an obedient and grateful response of the whole person, not simply intellectual assent. Likewise, 'ignorance' is the failure to be grateful and obedient" (O'Brien, 321). Men are not free from punishment for their ignorance, though this is a common idea in modern thought. Their ignorance is not due to the external impact of the environment upon them; it is *in them*.

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"Because of the hardness of their heart" is a subordinate, not a coordinate clause. This means that unbelievers are responsible to God for their ignorance due to the hardness of their hearts. "Hardness" is not simply blindness; it is stubbornness and a deliberate refusal to respond to the light brought to them by God. They are not just incapable of knowing God, they willfully resist knowing Him and the moral implications associated with doing so.

The practical proof of their being in the state described in verse 18 is now given.

4:19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

Verse 19 describes the moral lifestyle into which the unbeliever has sunk. He is described as having become callous. In a literal sense, "callus" was used of the hardening of the skin so that it no longer felt pain. It had lost its sensitivity. Here, it is a moral insensitivity so that the person no longer feels guilt or shame over his actions. In Greek, this expression is in the perfect tense, indicating that the people lived like this as a way of life. Because they no longer had a conscience to guide them, they went even further into degrading activities. They gave themselves over to sensuality and acted in greed and impurity. In Romans 1, this degradation into sin is viewed as a divine act of God; that is "God gave them over to degrading passions" (Ro. 1:24, 26, 28) - especially unnatural sensuality (1:24-27). Here, the unbeliever is said to hand himself over to degrading passions. In the human choice of sin, God's judgment takes place.

The three categories of sin that humans give themselves over to are sensuality, impurity, and greediness.

The first term "sensuality" can also mean indecency or vice. It is sin that flaunts itself openly without any shame, fear, or self-respect. The Gentiles give themselves over to this so that they can practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

"Impurity" has a broad meaning of unrestrained, excessive living and can refer to uncontrolled sexual behavior.

Covetousness or greed is the final vice listed. Although this introduces a new category of sin, the phrase "with greediness" describes the manner in which impurity was pursued - theirs was a greed or insatiable desire to participate in more and more forms of immorality.

4:20 But you did not learn Christ in this way,

That is, your knowledge of Christ has not led you to live as the heathen.

Christ is the object of the readers' learning. The expression to "learn Christ" does not appear anywhere else, but probably means to know about Him and to place one's faith in Him. In the context of ignorance and obedience, it means obeying Him as well (see notes on 4:18).

What Paul means by "learning Christ" (4:20) is described by the statement "you have heard Him and have been taught in Him" (4:21).

4:21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,

In contrast to their former manner of life, Paul reminds them of what they were taught about Christ. The expressions he uses evoke the image of being trained in a school.

"If indeed" does not express doubt, but confidence that they are indeed in Christ (*εἰ γάρ* in Greek is used only five times in the NT - II Cor. 5:3; Gal.3:4; Eph. 3:2; 4:21; Col. 1:23- and is used to make a preceding underlying assertion explicit - O'Brien, 226, n.5). It has more of the idea of 'if, as I take for granted.' (Hodge, Commentary, 258). The apostle assumes that they had heard Christ and had been taught in Him.

"To hear him does not mean to hear about him. . . [rather it] implies intelligence and obedience, as in the frequently occurring phrase, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;" and "To-day if ye will hear his voice, &c.," and in a multitude of other cases. To hear the voice of God or of Christ,

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therefore, is not merely to perceive with the outward ear but to receive with the understanding and the heart." (Hodge Commentary 257)

"You have heard Him" refers to the fact that Christ was the One (O'Brien, 325) who stirred in them the desire to be saved, while "you have been taught in Him" speaks of the knowledge about Christ they had received through the instruction of the apostles, prophets, and teachers.

"Truth" appears without the article, but it is common for abstract nouns to appear this way even though they are definite (e.g. sin, death, and grace) (O'Brien, 325). Because the truth is in Christ, believers should not be led astray by false teachers, but should put on the new self which has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth (4:24), and (cf. 5:9; 6:14), and speak the truth to each other (4:25).

4:22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,

The things that they have been taught (cf. 4:21) are described by three infinitives; "lay aside" (4:22), "be renewed" (4:23), and "put on" (4:24).

To become a believer signifies a fundamental break with the past. These are commands to continue on in the condition in which they were called.

In the OT, the idea of being clothed with moral qualities occurs fairly frequently (Isa. 51:9; 52:1; Psa. 132:9; 93:1; 104:1; Job 29:14; 40:10; II Chron. 6:41). However, here it is not laying aside and putting on moral qualities; it is laying aside and putting on a person.

"The 'old person' here, as in Romans 6:6 and Colossians 3:9, designates the whole personality of a person when he is ruled by sin" (O'Brien, 328; see my notes on Ro. 6:6). In Romans, a definitive break is made between the old man and the new man. Here, the readers are told to put off the old self off. Again, as throughout this epistle, the tension exists between who we are in Christ and living in light of that.

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The "old self" is still connected with our "former manner of life", and "is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit;" that which is connected with our life outside of Christ is being corrupted; that which is in Him is being created in God's likeness (4:24).

As Hodge says,

"Sanctification includes dying to sin, or mortification of the flesh, and living to righteousness; or as it is here expressed, putting off the old man and putting on the new man. The obvious allusion is to a change of clothing. To put off, is to renounce, to remove from us, as garments which are laid aside. To put on, is to adopt, to make our own. We are called upon to put off the works of darkness, Rom. 13:12, to put away lying, Eph. 4:25; to put off anger, wrath, malice, &c., Col. 3:8; to lay aside all filthiness, James 1:21. On the other hand, we are called upon to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. 13:14, Gal. 3:27; the armor of light, Rom. 13:12; bowels of mercy, Col. 3:12; and men are said to be clothed with power from on high, Luke 24:49; with immortality or incorruption, &c., 1 Cor. 15:53. As a man's clothes are what strike the eye—so these expressions are used in reference to the whole phenomenal life—all those acts and attributes by which the interior life of the soul is manifested;—and not only that, but also the inherent principle itself whence these acts flow. For here we are said to put off the old man, that is, our corrupt nature, which is old or original as opposed to the new man or principle of spiritual life. Comp. Col. 3:9, "Lie not one to another, seeing you have put off the old man with his deeds." Rom. 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him." What is here called "the old man" Paul elsewhere calls himself, as in Rom. 7:14, "I am carnal," "There dwells no good thing in me," v. 18; or, "law in the members," v. 23; or "the flesh" as opposed to the spirit, as in Gal. 5:16, 17. This evil principle or nature is called old because it precedes what is new, and because it is corrupt. And it is called "man," because it is ourselves. We are to be changed—and not merely our acts. We are to crucify ourselves. This original principle of evil is not destroyed in regeneration, but is to be daily mortified, in the conflicts of a whole life." (Hodge, Commentary, 260)

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Whoever is being corrupted is being destroyed. It is a process of decay that leads to death (cf. Ro. 8:21; Gal. 6:8). The cause of this corruption is the sinful desires that lead people astray. They are illusionary (lusts of deceit) since they have lost touch with reality and lead to destruction. Their deceitful nature stands in opposition to the truth which is in Jesus.

4:23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

The idea of being renewed is sandwiched between the two opposing thoughts: the laying aside the old self and putting on the new. Laying aside the old self and putting on the new are aorist infinitives in Greek which view each action as a whole. They are seen as completed actions in the past. "Be renewed," however, is a present infinitive which is a progressive process. It is also passive, which means that we do not renew ourselves but someone outside of us (God) is renewing us; that is, we are being renewed. At the same time, this is a command to be renewed. Believers are to yield themselves to God and allow themselves to be renewed in the inner person (cf. see my notes on Romans for the same idea in Ro. 12:2).

The renewal process takes place in the mind (cf. Ro. 12:2). "The spirit of your mind" has been taken in two ways; (1) as simply a reference to the mind, or (2) as a reference to the Holy Spirit that dwells in us. In the latter interpretation, Paul would be saying to allow the Holy Spirit to renew our minds. However, Paul doesn't say the Spirit *in* your mind, but the spirit *of* your mind (your mind's spirit) and it is hard to imagine how the Holy Spirit can belong to the mind. Had Paul meant that we are to be renewed by the Holy Spirit, a Greek grammatical construction is available to say that (such as εν πνεύματι τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν). It is more probable grammatically to see the spirit and the mind being used as synonyms describing the sphere in which the renewal process takes place. The point being made here is that the thinking needs to be changed in order for the believer to be gradually transformed to walk in a manner worthy of their calling and be conformed to the image of Christ.

However, it should also be pointed out that the process of personal mind renewal is motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5; II

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Cor. 3:18; 4:16). The change is first inward, but results in outward characteristics of godliness, as demonstrated by the next verse.

"The verb ἀνανεοῦσθαι, to be made new, is passive. This renewal is always represented as the work of God. "We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works," ch. 2:10. It is therefore called "a renewing of the Holy Ghost." Titus 3:5. Both these phrases "to be renewed" and "to put on the new man" may express either the instantaneous act of regeneration, or the gradual work of sanctification. Thus in Rom. 12:2, we are exhorted "not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind." So in this place, and in the parallel passage in Col. 3:9, 10, these terms express the whole process by which the soul is restored to the image of God. It is a process of renewal from the beginning to the end. The apostle says, "his inner man is renewed day by day." 2 Cor. 4:16" (Hodge, Commentary, 261)

The contrast between the mindset of the believer and the unbeliever could not be sharper. In verse 17-19, the unbeliever is darkened in his mind, being deceived by his own lusts and in the process of decay. His life is marked by futility and separation from God. Here, through the renewal of the mind, the new man is strengthened and conformed to the image of Christ.

4:24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

The three fundamental truths that the believers had been taught were to "lay aside the old self" (4:22), to "be renewed in the spirit of their minds" (4:23), and to "put on the new self" (4:24). Verse 24 addresses this teaching.

In the Book of Ephesians, the "new man" is a term used of both the Church as a whole - the new creation of God composed of both Jews and Gentiles (2:15) - and of the individual believer. Becoming a new man is the work of God, not ours, but we must actively appropriate what God is doing. This same mix of divine activity and human response is laid out in Philippians 2:12-13 (see my notes on this section).

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The new self is a new creation. The idea of creation is also found in Ephesians 2:10 where it states that "we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works that we should walk in them." Because we are His work, His ethical qualities of holiness, righteousness and truth are part of us.

Secondly, the new-self has been created in the likeness of God and is therefore to be like Him. We are new and are to live in accordance to what we are.

Thirdly, the new man is "of the truth." Holiness and righteousness that are part of the makeup of being a new creation come from the truth which, according to verse 21, is in Christ Himself.

Hodge summarizes it beautifully,

"As we are called to put off our corrupt nature as a ragged and filthy garment, so we are required to put on our new nature as a garment of light. And as the former was personified as an old man, decrepit, deformed, and tending to corruption, so the latter is personified as a new man, fresh, beautiful, and vigorous, like God, for it is in the likeness after God created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. In the parallel passage it is said to be renewed "after the image of God," Col. 3:10. "After God," therefore, means after his image. The "new self" is that part of us which has been created by God when we believed and displays the ethical qualities of righteousness and holiness of the truth. As mentioned earlier, this third command is in the aorist tense showing that we are not being asked to continually put on the new man, but that we should conduct our lives in light of the fact that the new man has already been put on.

... This passage is of special doctrinal importance, as teaching us the true nature of the image of God in which man was originally created. That image did not consist merely in man's rational nature, nor in his immortality, nor in his dominion, but specially in that righteousness and holiness, that rectitude in all his principles, and that susceptibility of devout affections which are inseparable from the possession of the truth, or true knowledge of God" (Hodge, Commentary, 265-267).

Having outlined the old and new humanities in this paragraph, Paul has set the stage for more detailed exhortations that show how this new humanity is to relate to others (4:25-5:2).

4:25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

In verse 25, Paul begins to define more concretely what the behavior of the new person (4:24) looks like. There are conscious themes carried over from verses 16-23 of "truth", "putting on the new self" and "laying aside the old" identity.

In verse 22, the believer is told to "lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit." One manifestation of the deceitful ways of the old self that needs to be laid aside is falsehood. But laying aside falsehood is not enough. The new self, that is, the new identity that aligns itself with the truth that is found in Christ, must be put on (The same truth is characteristic of the gospel - Col. 1:5; I Tim. 2:4 and God). Each sinful habit should be replaced with that which is new.

"Wherefore, i. e. on the ground of the general obligation to be conformed to the divine image, putting away lying, as one part of the filthy garments belonging to the old man; speak every man truth with his neighbor. A neighbor, ὁ πλησίον, the Scripture teaches us, is any one near to us, a fellow man of any creed or nation; and to all such we are bound to speak the truth. But the context shows that Paul is here speaking to Christians, and the motive by which the duty is enforced shows that by neighbor he here means a fellow-Christian, as in Rom. 15, 2. The motive in question is the intimate relation in which believers stand to each other. They are all members of the same body intimately united, as he taught in verse 16, with each other and with Christ their common head. As it would be unnatural and absurd for the hand to deceive the foot, or the eye the ear, so there is a violation of the very law of their union for one Christian to deceive another" (Hodge, Commentary, 267-268)

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There is a strong connection between Ephesians 4:25 and Zechariah 8. In speaking to the remnant of Israel, Zechariah 8:16 and 17 say, "These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates. 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." The people are called the "City of truth" (Zech. 8:3) because YHWH will dwell among them and He is a God of righteousness and truth (Zech. 8:8, cf. Eph 4:21). Similarly, in Ephesians, God is said to dwell among believers (Eph. 2:22) and the new person, like the true believer in Israel, is expected to display the nature of God in his actions.

The Church is to be a model of humanity by being united and living in peace with each other. This involves being truthful. Likewise, Zechariah predicts that the testimony of the remnant will be a drawing force that leads the nations to worship God.

Zechariah 8

20 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'It will yet be that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities.

21 'And the inhabitants of one will go to another saying, "Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; I will also go."

22 'So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD.'

23 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'"

4:26 Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

4:27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.

"And" connects "giving Satan an opportunity" with "letting the sun go down on our anger" and gives the reason for the prohibition.

". . . it is certain that all anger is not sinful. Christ himself, it is said, regarded the perverse Jews "with anger." Mark 3, 5. The same generic

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feeling, if mingled with holy affections, or in a holy mind, is virtuous; if mingled with malice it is sinful. Both feelings, and both combinations of feeling, are expressed in Scripture by the term anger. Nothing in itself sinful can be attributed to God, but anger is attributed to him. Verse 31 is not inconsistent with this interpretation, for there the context shows the apostle speaks of malicious anger—just as "all hatred" means all malice, and not the hatred of evil" (Hodge, Commentary, 270)

In order to maintain the unity of the body, anger must also be laid aside, for anger is a serious obstacle to maintaining peace. There are certain situations when anger is justified, but anger can easily turn into hatred, a spirit of vengeance, or can flow from injured pride. James says something similar in 1:19-20 "This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."

In order to prevent anger from festering and turning into sin, a time limit is placed upon it.

"We are neither to cherish anger, nor are we to allow Satan to take advantage of our being angry. Anger when cherished gives the Tempter great power over us, as it furnishes a motive to yield to his evil suggestions" (Hodge, Commentary, 270).

4:28 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.

"The word *ὁ κλέπτων* [him who steals] does not mean one who stole, but one who steals, the thief. As he used his hands to steal, let him use them in doing what is right—i. e. in honest labor" (Hodge).

Christians should not make earning money their sole aim, but use work as the means of helping their fellow man. Paul himself (Acts 20:35; 2Thess. 3:8) acted as he taught (1Thess. 4:11).

Paul elsewhere lays down the general principle, "if any would not work neither should he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). "No one is entitled to be supported by

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others, who is able to support himself. This is one great principle of scriptural economics. Another, however, no less important is, that those who cannot work are entitled to aid—and therefore the apostle adds as a motive why the strong should labor—that they may have to contribute to him that has need. No man lives for himself; and no man should labor for himself alone, but with the definite object to be able to assist others. Christian principles, if fairly carried out, would speedily banish pauperism and other cognate evils from our modern civilization" (Hodge).

4:29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Verse 29 returns to the topic of speech, although it's addressed in terms of good and bad speech rather than true and false speech (v.25). The action of doing good to others includes the use of the hands (4:28) and the use of the mouth.

"Unwholesome" is used of decayed trees that produce rotten fruit (cf. Matt. 7:17-18) and of rotten fish (Matt. 12:33-34). Harmful speech of all kinds is prohibited (cf. Col. 3:8; Eph. 5:4). Words defile the person (Matt. 15:11) but also destroy the unity of the body. Every careless word that men speak will be remembered by God and judged in the Day of Judgment (Matt. 12:36).

Unwholesome speech needs to be put off and words of grace need to replace them. Such words build others up and do so according to the need of the moment. This could mean that the believer is the medium through which God gives grace, or it might simply be that in the process of becoming like Christ, the believer dispenses grace to others as does Christ.

4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

"And" connects this verse with the negative command of verse 29; i.e. "let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth and do not grieve the Holy Spirit." This gives an additional reason for wholesome speech just as "do not give the devil an opportunity" did in verse 27. The Holy Spirit is the

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one who brings reconciliation and unity to the body (2:18; 22: 4:3-4) and is especially grieved when believers cause disharmony.

Grieving the Spirit is a concept that is connected to other verses as well. Christ is seated in a position of authority over all powers and when the believer gives Satan an opportunity, he gives him authority in an area in which he has no right.

"The Holy Spirit of God" is a phrase not used anywhere else in the NT. It characterizes the Spirit as Holy and therefore, unable to tolerate the sinful acts of men. He is also the Spirit of *God* emphasizing the seriousness of the offense.

Being sealed to the day of redemption is a stamp of God's own character on believers and a guarantee that they will be protected until He takes full possession of them in the day of redemption. How disgusting it is for believers to grieve the One who has blessed them with such goodness.

"The Day of Redemption" is the final Day of Judgment and salvation when salvation is fully experienced and realized. Our salvation is our present possession, but its fullness is not yet our experience.

4:31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Verse 31 returns to the subject of anger (cf. v.26). The same pattern continues - an exhortation to put off certain sinful actions and to put on new ones. The vices are presented in a climatic manner, moving from the inner attitude of bitterness to its outward manifestations in the forms of wrath, anger and clamor (public shouting, cursing, and abusive language). Although there is an exception when anger isn't sinful (v. 26), the dangers associated with anger are numerous and all-encompassing - "all" types of anger are forbidden.

The first vice to lay aside is bitterness. The word in Greek includes a sharp, intense resentment or hatred. Aristotle describes it as an attitude that "creates lasting wrath, hard to reconcile, and sustaining anger for a long time" (O'Brien, 350). If there is a difference between "anger" and

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"wrath", the latter speaks of a seething or festering anger, while "anger" signifies an outburst of rage. "Clamor" is used of a loud scream or shout. It can be a shout of joy (Lk. 1:42), the sound of weeping (Rev. 21:4), or the noise made when people quarrel (Acts 23:9). The word translated as "slander" describes abusive speech. In both the OT and NT, it is used of blaspheming God. When used in relation to other people, it can take the form of lies or gossip. The list ends by forbidding malice.

In contrast to practicing these sins that cause disunity among believers, the Christian community is to be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving to each other.

4:32 And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

This list of positive virtues is also listed in Colossians 3:12-13.

Kindness is a quality of God Himself (Ps. 24:7; 30:19; 65:11). In Jeremiah 33:11; 24:2, 3, 5, the prophet speaks of God's kindness in the midst of Israel's sin (cf. Eph. 2:7; Ro. 11:22; Tit. 3:4). In response to His kindness, those who have put on the new self are to be kind to fellow believers. Kindness cannot be generated from the human will, but is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

Compassion or tender-heartedness is another word often used in the NT in to describe God's attitude in relation to sinners (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 18:27; Lk. 1:78; 7:13; 10:33; 15:20).

Lastly, the believer is told to forgive others. The motivation to do so is the forgiveness of God in Christ, which they themselves have received. God's forgiveness is the model that is to be followed.

**5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;
5:2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.**

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Ephesians 5:1 and 2 summarize and give the conclusion to the admonitions in chapter 4. In response to what Paul has said in 4:25-32, the believer is to do two things: imitate *God* and walk in love.