

“Ephesians”

Fall Series 1

Lesson 6

“Ephesians 4:17-32”

Objective: To understand the message that Paul meant to convey to his audience and then to come to understand what that message means for us today as those living in the 21st century. We will seek to ascertain what this message means and to determine how we are intended to live our lives as those who are disciples of Christ in our modern context in light of the message it contains.

Materials: We will begin by examining carefully the Greek text of Ephesians, examine other early translations such as the Syriac Peshitta, and any other sources along with the historical setting of the first century Roman world that can help us to understand the original meaning. We will then examine early interpretations and understandings and examine commentaries and modern interpretations to enlighten our understanding for our contextual situation.

Procedures

- 1.** We will begin by translating the text from Greek into English
- 2.** We will examine the contextual setting and seek to understand as much as we possibly can about the historical, cultural and social settings in order to understand the message.
- 3.** From here we will seek to find out how to best apply the calling that Paul has for the early disciples to our modern contextual framework in order to do our very best to live as disciples of Christ in our modern era.
- 4.** We will seek to understand the attitudes that we are called to have as disciples and to reflect not only the actions that are the calling of a disciple, but also to learn how to form our attitudes to reflect our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.

Translation

Ephesians 4:17 Now this I say and I testify to in the Lord, you must no longer walk, just as also the nations walk in the futility of their mind ¹⁸ being darkened in the mind, being estranged from the life of God because of the ignorance in them, because of the hardness of their heart, ¹⁹ which has lost all feeling, they have delivered themselves to sensuality unto work of every uncleanness in lust. ²⁰ Now this is not the way you learned Christ, ²¹ for surely you hear Him and in Him were taught in Jesus, ²² to put away your former lifestyle, the old man, the corrupt, the deceitfulness according to desires, ²³ and to be renewed in your mind in the Spirit ²⁴ and to clothe (yourselves) in the new man created by God in righteousness and holiness of the truth. ²⁵ Therefore putting away falsehood, speaking the truth to each person among his neighbor, because we are part of one another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun set upon your wrath, ²⁷ nor give place for the devil. ²⁸ The thieves must give up stealing, but rather let them toil, doing good, working with their [own]

hands, in order that you might have something to share with those having need. ²⁹ Let no rotten word proceed out of your mouth, but if anything is good for the building up of the needy, in order that (you) are giving favor (grace) to those hearing. ³⁰ And do not give pain to the Holy Spirit of God, in which you were sealed unto the day of redemption. ³¹ Put away all bitterness and wrath and anger and shouting and blasphemy from yourself with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as also God, in Christ forgave you.

Lesson

As we continue in this chapter, we need to be reminded that this break, between this section and the remainder of the letter, is an artificial break. In reality, we are simply continuing on in the letter that Paul wrote and intended to be read to the audience in a matter of a few minutes. Paul here continues his admonition challenging his readers to live a life that is “worthy” of their “calling.” However, in this section Paul indicates a major difference in what he has to say. He begins by noting that the testimony that he is giving is “in the Lord.” ^{4:17} **Now this I say and I testify to in the Lord, you must no longer walk, just as also the nations walk in the futility of their mind** This is more than simply a personal statement on the part of Paul, it is a witness “in the Lord.” This statement should provide additional weight to the ethical instructions that are to follow. The message is that they are not to continue to live as they did in their former lives (cf. Colossians 3:5-10¹). It certainly also indicates the close

¹ **So put to death the parts of your life that belong to the earth, such as sexual immorality, moral corruption, lust, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). 6 The wrath of God is coming upon disobedient people because of these things. 7 You used to live this way, when you were alive to these things. 8 But now set aside these things, such as anger, rage, malice, slander, and obscene language. 9 Don't lie to each other. Take off the old human nature with its practices 10 and put on the new nature, which is renewed in knowledge by conforming to the image of the one who created it.** CEB.

relationship that Paul has with the Lord. Some think that the phrase that I have translated as “the nations” (which is a literal translation) should instead be translated as “the pagans” in this context.²

This is an anachronistic translation as the word “pagan,” at least as we understand it today, is a word that will not have been used in this time period. The word “pagan” comes from the Latin word *paganus*, which means villager, rustic, and in fact refers to a small unit of land in a rural district. It originally lacked any religious significance.³ It was after Christianity came into vogue in the 4th century that the word took on the meaning that we commonly understand today. Certainly, there is a sense that this idea is the implied meaning, but I think translating this as “pagan” is not really correct here. I think Paul is really intending to include all that are not followers of Christ, which would include Jews who would not normally be included under the term “pagan.”

The implication of what Paul writes here is that those that are “in Christ” have transferred their allegiance, their motivations,

² Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, in the Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary series, (Macon GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2012), p. 115.

³ N. S. Gill, *The Etymology of the World Pagan*, <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-pagan-120163#:~:text=Origins%20of%20the%20Word%20Pagan,originally%20lacked%20a%20religious%20significance>.

and their goals into a new realm of existence. He describes the former way of life in terms of “futility of their mind” (ματαιότητι τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν). The word ματαιότης - *mataiotes* has the meaning of “vanity,” “purposelessness” and “futility.” This word denotes not merely “... finitude or transitoriness, but the emptiness, folly, and ultimate pointlessness that has affected the Gentiles faculty of intellectual and moral perception.”⁴

This is the case because Paul restates the state of those without Christ. They are those ¹⁸ **being darkened in the mind, being estranged from the life of God because of the ignorance in them, because of the hardness of their heart, ...** Paul uses a rare word here for “darkened” that is only found elsewhere in the New Testament at Revelation 9:2;⁵ 16:10.⁶ As you can see from the way that this word is used (ἐσκοτωμένοι - *eskotomenoi*) in Revelation it certainly seems to carry with it the implication of not

⁴ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 42 (Dallas TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1990), p. 277.

⁵ **1Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the abyss. ² He opened the shaft of the abyss; and smoke rose up from the shaft, like smoke from a huge furnace. The sun and air were darkened by the smoke from the shaft. CEB.**

⁶ **1Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the abyss. ² He opened the shaft of the abyss; and smoke rose up from the shaft, like smoke from a huge furnace. The sun and air were darkened by the smoke from the shaft. CEB.**

only physical darkness, but a darkness that indicates the touch of evil. This implication seems to be confirmed as we move to the next phrase here in Ephesians where Paul states that they are: **being estranged from the life of God.** The implication that there is an element of the force of darkness here can also be found later in Paul's warnings in Ephesians 6:11-12.⁷

There is the implication that **being estranged from the life of God** leaves one in a vulnerable position and it is in this section that Paul will begin touching on this very important concept that is a central tenet of the Christian faith. This is the conceptual framework that indicates that there is more to life than simply the physical realm that we can see, feel, taste, and touch. Paul is seeking to set the foundation for fortifying his audience against the onslaught that comes from forces beyond the range of our sensual perceptions. In their former life there was no protection from these forces and even in those avenues that they pursued to gain relief from these forces they were often deluded into actually moving deeper into the grasp of these dark forces (in apotropaic practices such as amulets, lifting of curses etc.).

⁷ **11 Put on God's armor so that you can make a stand against the tricks of the devil. 12 We aren't fighting against human enemies but against rulers, authorities, forces of cosmic darkness, and spiritual powers of evil in the heavens.** CEB.

For those living in the 21st century these things may often be considered mere superstition, or primitive beliefs. We must remember that the ancient perceptual reality of cause and effect was vastly different from ours today. It can be our view that our perspective view of reality today is vastly superior today, however this may not totally be correct. Often today, we ignore the spiritual and many even consider it a myth created by ancient minds to deal with a chaotic and dangerous world. 'It was Gerald Heard who said: "Newton banished God from nature, Darwin banished Him from life, and now Freud has banished Him from His last stronghold, the soul." The one thing I wish here to suggest about that dictum is this—that if for great numbers of our contemporaries the effect of Newton, Darwin and Freud has been to banish the divine, it has even more emphatically been to banish the demonic. St. Paul's "principalities and powers" and "spirit forces of evil" are now known, we are told, to have been mere apocalyptic imagination.'⁸

We need to understand this difference in perspective as we seek to understand the message of Paul. If we are to truly

⁸ James S. Stewart, "On a Neglected Emphasis in New Testament Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 4:3 (1951), pp. 292-301.

comprehend his message, this difference in perspective, or we will distort the message of Paul. We are perhaps in danger of being the same in some senses as the audience was before coming to Christ people in that we may be one of those: ¹⁹ **which has lost all feeling, they have delivered themselves to sensuality unto work of every uncleanness in lust.** Paul contrasts the state of those “in Christ” with their previous reality. A key verse in understanding Paul’s perspective here is Galatians 1:4: **He gave himself for our sins, so He could deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.**⁹ The people of this “present evil age” were people that had delivered themselves over to sensuality and unto “work of uncleanness in lust.” They were people who had lost their feelings, making them in some sense something other than fully human. It is only with the advent of what Christ has done that the humanity of those called as followers of Jesus are brought to a state of true reality. They are no longer blinded and desensitized by the forces of evil.

There is some connection in what Paul is saying with “learning” (μανθάνω - *manthano*). This is a word that carries the

⁹ CEB.

idea of “learning” or in some sense coming to “understanding.”

This word indicates something that requires effort on the part of the audience, something that is not simply a one time, a short term, matter, but something requiring perseverance and continuous effort to reach a level of understanding. ²⁰ **Now this is not the way you learned Christ,** ²¹ **for surely you hear Him and in Him were taught the truth in Jesus,** ²² **to put away your former lifestyle, the old man, the corrupt, the deceitfulness according to desires,** ²³ **and to be renewed in your mind in the Spirit** Paul here challenges his audience to remember what they had learned. So even the effort involved in the initial learning requires some continued effort on their part. Paul then reminds them of what it is that they have learned. He will continue to emphasize the magnitude of the transformation that this has wrought in those that are now “in Christ.”

He will use new imagery and he speaks of putting “away your former lifestyle, the old man,” This is a phrase that is difficult to translate into English and still retain the full implication that it carries in Greek. In a classic essay on the “Old Man” in The Pardoner’s Tale, Robert P. Miller defines the Pauline

metaphor for us in a manner that can perhaps aid our understanding of the metaphor of Paul here:

The term “Old Man” is Paul’s ...[,] who calls him the “body of sin.” As an aspect of the nature of man, the *vetus homo*¹⁰ represents the flesh and its manifold lusts, opposed to the *novus homo*:¹¹ that is, the spirit and reason by which these are subdued. In terms of the Biblical history of man, the Old Man, in any human being, is the image of fallen Adam, unregenerate in accepted grace and unredeemed by Christ, Who is called the “New Man.” As a result of original sin, all men are said to be born in the image of the *vetus*¹² Adam. By baptism, however, we are said to die to sin and to be reborn in the image of Christ; and he who adopts this image is

¹⁰ Translation - old man.

¹¹ Translation - new man.

¹² Translation. “old.”

termed the New Man (sometimes the Young Man). As Christ's flesh was crucified and buried that the Old Law might be overthrown, so should the *vetus homo*,¹³ or the flesh be crucified and buried, first by baptism ... and later in penance, by a similar free act of will.¹⁴

In the meaning that Paul is trying to convey here there is the sense that a major transformation that has taken place in the very essence of those who are now believers "in Christ." This is a foundational and quantum level change and now Paul is calling them to live into that change, using the understanding and the vision that are a part of the transformation. It is as if Paul recognizes that in the same way that there are times that a mother bird must push the baby bird out of the nest in order to get them to fly and move on in their development Paul is challenging his audience to live into the reality of their new, transformed, existence and to fly.

¹³ Translation - old man.

¹⁴ Rodney Delasanta, "Putting Off the Old Man and Putting on the New: Ephesians 4:22-24 in Chaucer, Shakespeare, Swift, and Dostoevsky," *Christianity and Literature* 51:3 (Spring 2002), pp. 339-362.


He challenges them: ...²⁴ **and to clothe (yourselves) in the new man created by God in righteousness and holiness of the truth.** The implications of what Paul means will be spelled out in more detail as he proceeds, but the metaphor of clothing themselves in the “new man” challenges them to “put on Christ” and in that process to recognize that they are indeed changed in such a way that their former values and former way of life will lose their appeal. Evidently Paul has concerns that they are either already having a tendency to drift into such an existence or he is actually aware that they have in fact drifted into such an existence. This would be a retrograde step in the wrong direction and even though there is a sense in which they are transformed there is also here in Paul a sense in which that transformation must not be taken for granted and the status quo of the old life be allowed to reinfect their existence.

It may be the case that the audience could misunderstand or fail to choose the right way that Paul intends them to choose, so he adds clarity and exacting specifics. ²⁵ **Therefore putting away the falsehood, speaking the truth to each person among his neighbor, because we are part of one another.** He tells them to

speaking the truth; not to lie. An interesting thing is that Plato addresses some of these same ethical issues in his work *The Republic*. Plato is particularly concerned with the lying that he sees coming from Poets (Homer, Hesiod). Plato sees the influence of these famous poets as the source of a great many of the ills that plague society. Paul recognizes the same issue and his solution is to put away falsehood and to tell the truth. He calls them to recognize their interconnectedness as a community of believers.

You may say, well that was a problem for them, but it is not a problem for us today in our modern context. The fact is that this is very much still a major problem for our society today. The range of this problem goes from everything that includes deliberate lies (what we would call black lies) to what we might refer to as “little white lies.” Neither is acceptable, and both are condemned as unacceptable, and not in line with being “in Christ.” In the “south” even what might be termed as “southern polity” can be a form of falsehood. When we fail to speak the “truth in love”¹⁵ we are in fact not living into the call that is to live as “worthy of the


¹⁵ Ephesians 4:15 - **Instead, by speaking the truth with love, let's grow in every way into Christ,** ... CEB.



calling of Christ.”¹⁶ This is certainly not intended as a license for being brutal and rude, but it is a call to be people of truth, and as always to express the truth in love. I realize that this incredibly difficult for people, especially southern people. Keeping the balance of gentleness and love while speaking the truth is an amazingly difficult task at times.

I have known people in my life that had a rare gift for doing this and doing it with excellence. One of those that immediately comes to mind is a dear friend of mine who passed away in 2015. Even though he passed five years ago his words and his life still challenge me. He was a man that could speak the truth in love in a way that when he had finished you not only felt loved, you also felt shame for having disappointed Floyd Stumbo and you wanted to do better. I aspire to be more like this dear friend and father in Christ; to grow and be better at giving genuine complements and when needed to speak the words of admonition and correction before things reach the level of crisis. I try not to avoid those hard conversations. I try to see the train coming and warn people before it is too late to avoid crisis. This is not always popular, and

¹⁶ Ephesians 4:1 - **Therefore, as a prisoner for the Lord, I encourage you to live as people worthy of the call you received from God.** CEB.




it has lost me a lot of people that I thought were friends; probably because I am not really as proficient at conveying the loving part as well as I am the truth part. I continue to pray for wisdom in this and I certainly get ample practice in life.

We must remember that we are in fact a part of one another.

²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun set upon your wrath, ²⁷ nor give place for the devil. Paul here is challenging his audience to recognize that as followers of Jesus they are called into community. Community is hard. If no one has ever angered you in community then you are truly an extraordinary person. Often it is the case that we can project our own feelings and motivations onto others so that when they do certain things, we understand those actions in light of who we are; and not necessarily in light of who they are. This may sound weird or confusing, but it is the case that we all make judgments about other's actions and choices. Often our judgments are made anticipating that they think the same way we do. The reality is not this simple.

Sometimes we expect people to have the same understandings, or abilities to understand things in the way that



we do. This is to simplify things and to fail to take into consideration the diversity of people adequately. Paul does not say it is wrong to get angry, I suspect he knew that is not really possible for us. All of us have experienced anger to some degree in our lifetimes. What Paul says is not allow the anger to lead you into sin. When we are angry we often lose our ability to be objective, to be loving, to be truly thoughtful, and even at times to be rational. This can lead us to react instinctively and sometimes that means sinfully as we allow the more animal side of our nature to overrule the more spiritual aspects, the more Godly aspects of our nature.

Paul challenges his audience to deal with their wrath and not to let the sun set upon that wrath. Do not let it fester and infect your life in a way that allows that anger, which can be like an infection to spread and become something sinful. This can be really challenging for some. Sometimes we are angry about things that are beyond our control and we just need to let them go. Sometimes we are angry about things that are more our problem than someone else's problem, and we must learn to let that go too. Sometimes we need to address the problem in truth and in love in



a way that opens the door to reconciliation and closure.

Obviously, this is also a risky venture because we cannot control others. We can only control one person in this world and that person is ourselves.

Paul recognizes that anger presents opportunities for Satan, the tempter, to use our wrath as a wedge, as an excuse, as way of access to our weaknesses to cause us to stumble, to gain a foothold in our lives. Just because we have decided to become followers of Christ does not mean that Satan is finished with his attacks upon us. As a matter of fact, it if we look at the life of Jesus, we must expect that the more we seek to follow the will of God and to serve Him the more powerful, the more prominent and the more persistent will be the attacks of the enemy, Satan. He seeks to turn us away from the path of Jesus and to cause us to fail. Paul understands this more than most.¹⁷ Paul will address this more in chapter 6 of Ephesians, but even here he is telegraphing his deep concerns for repelling the attacks of Satan and his minions.

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 12:7 - **I was given a thorn in my body because of the outstanding revelations I've received so that I wouldn't be conceited. It's a messenger from Satan sent to torment me so that I wouldn't be conceited.** CEB.

Again, Paul may either be concerned that they will apply what he is writing to them in some abstract manner, or perhaps he is actually aware of some of these issues among the people that he addresses so he gets very specific. ²⁸ **The thieves must give up stealing, but rather let them toil, doing good, working with their [own] hands, in order that you might have something to share with those having need.** It appears that there were people that were now followers of Jesus that lived by stealing. Paul challenges them to give it up and instead to toil doing good, working with their own hands. In the midst of this he challenges them to share with those that are in need. There are many things that could be said about what it means to be in need, but Paul does not elaborate here. He uses a word here that could be translated either as “need,” “necessity” or even as “want” (*χρεία* - *chreian*). Certainly, there is the implication that Paul would expect anyone that is following Christ to be honest, truthful, and to work to the best of their ability. The call is to be true community and to be a community that expresses the nature and love of Christ. Paul challenges us to look to the needs of others.

Paul is not finished with his addressing of those that are “needy.” He challenges them to ²⁹ **Let no rotten word proceed out of your mouth, but if anything is good for the building up of the needy, in order that (you) are giving favor (grace) to those hearing.** Often English translations seem to struggle with the word Paul uses here for what he does not want the words of the followers of Christ to be (σαπρὸς - *sapros*): They translate it variously as “foul,”¹⁸ “evil,”¹⁹ “unwholesome,”²⁰ “corrupt,”²¹ and this is a word that has at its heart the meaning of “rotten,” “putrid,” “diseased.” I have chosen the word “rotten” here as a good translation of what Paul says because it carries forward the idea that I believe Paul is trying to convey, which is that words, speech has power to corrupt not only itself but other things around it.


Perhaps you have noticed that if you have fruit in a bowl and one piece of that fruit begins to mold and turn rotten it quickly will spoil the whole bowl of fruit. I think this is exactly the type of imagery that Paul intends here. The rotten words from people

¹⁸ CEB.

¹⁹ NRSV.

²⁰ NET. NIV also has “unwholesome.”

²¹ KJV.



spoil the whole community and create a putrid mass of rotten people just like that rotten fruit spoils in that bowl of fruit.

Instead, Paul challenges his audience to use different words with the intent of building up rather than of causing the spread of the rot. He challenges them to be people that spread “favor” (grace). This is what they have received from God and they are challenged to be those that produce this and spread it in their words. As we stand in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic I hear health officials say that this virus has no legs, it uses the legs of people to spread. Paul intends for his audience to spread “favor” with their words that will infect the community and bring about good rather than evil, and rottenness.

Paul understands that his words are challenging and that it is going to take more than mere words to bring about this change and so he introduces into the context here once more the avenue of their power, that avenue is the Holy Spirit. He does this by challenging them not to “give pain,” not to inflict pain upon the Holy Spirit. **³⁰ And do not give pain to the Holy Spirit of God, in which you were sealed unto the day of redemption.** Once

again, we come back to this point that Paul had made in 1:13.²²

They have been “sealed with the Holy Spirit.” This is a great privilege and honor, but also it carries with it a great deal of responsibility. Today we have police officers that wear body cameras in order to record all their interactions with the public. The Holy Spirit is far more than a recording device of our lives in interactions. It empowers, it encourages, it provides guidance, and it reminds us that we are committed to the way of Christ.

However, it is not some mechanical device or unfeeling inanimate force; it is living, personal being that feels. When we act in ways that are out of character for being followers of Christ we cause pain to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not overpower us, force us to do the right things, or say the right things, but if we are attentive and conscious of its promptings and empowering it can help us to be more godly, more like Jesus, and to truly be builders of community in the way that God has called us to be. The Holy Spirit also reminds us of our goal, which is not to be selfish, sensual and corrupt. We are called to a higher calling, one which will ultimately mean our redemption and the full

²² **You too heard the word of truth in Christ, which is the good news of your salvation. You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit because you believed in Christ.** CEB.



restoration of the rule and reign of God not only in our own hearts and lives, but also in all of the cosmos.


In this, Paul challenges his audience with some words that call us all to be more like God and also to remind them of their own forgiveness. He writes, ³¹ **Put away all bitterness and wrath and anger and shouting and blasphemy from yourself with all malice.** ³² **Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as also God, in Christ, forgave you.**

They are to be marked as people that are not stained with traits that spoil, corrupt, and create challenges for their pursuit of God. They are called to be the building of community and to the unleashing of compassion as they pursue God. The challenge of Paul in this section is to call his audience to be agents of positive, grace-filled, change, reflecting their status as those redeemed by Christ, sealed with the Holy Spirit, loving, and forgiving one another in a manner that reflects their understanding of what God has done for them in granting them “favor” (grace).

Synopsis

Paul continues the admonitions that he had begun earlier in his letter calling on his audience to recognize that they are no longer in their former state of futility and blindness as are those that do not know Christ. He challenges them to put aside their former ignorance and blindness, to be soft of heart, feeling deeply things that they had formerly masked with sensuality. He challenges them to put away uncleanness and lust and to remember what they had learned “in Christ.”


They are challenged to put off the old man and to put on the new man, which is Christ. They are to leave behind things that marked their former way of life such as deceit, corruption, and lives dominated by sensual desires. They are called to have a mind that is renewed by the Spirit and to live lives of righteousness that are dominated by the Spirit’s renewal of their minds. They are to be people of truth that put aside falsehood and tell the truth. They are to be people that do not allow wrath to dominate them and instead live in ways that reflect the grace that they have been granted in Christ.



They are to be people that live recognizing that the world is filled with unseen forces that seek to cause them to stumble and fall away from following Christ. Those that steal are to give up stealing and undertake new occupations that will allow them to be able to give to those that are needy. They are to be people of gracious speech: speech that is not filled with rottenness but instead with speech that seeks to build people up rather than to tear them down. They are to be people that do not give pain to the Holy Spirit which means laying aside those things such as bitterness, wrath, shouting, blasphemy, and malice that cause pain to the Holy Spirit. They instead to be people that are kind, tenderhearted, forgiving, and grateful.

Questions

1. How do you view the authority of Scripture as something that impacts the way you live your life?
2. What are some ways that you see living as a follower of Christ as different than others live that are not followers of Christ?
3. When you think of someone who is hard-hearted, what images come to your mind?
4. Are there things that people do to avoid feeling pain? Are these things always good?
5. What are some things that you think of as representative of being devoted to the sensual?
6. What do you think the “way of Christ” is?
7. What are some ways that you seek to learn more about the “way of Christ?”
8. What do you think it means to be “renewed” in the mind in the Spirit?
9. How do you see that you have been “clothed in the new man?”
10. How do you see it as hard for people to “put away falsehood?”
11. What are some ways that you seek to not allow the sun to set on your wrath?
12. What are some ways that the devil uses anger to get a foothold in someone’s life?
13. What are some ways that you seek to help those that are in “need?”



14. What are some ways that you have seen “rotten” words effect people negatively?

15. What are some ways that you can express the “favor” of God to others?

16. What does it mean to you to be “sealed unto the day of redemption?”

17. What do you think it means to be “tenderhearted?”

18. What do you think it means to forgive others just as you have been forgiven in Christ?

To Take Home

What is Important to know?

It is important to know that Paul begins this section with words that are not just his opinion but carry the force of being the testimony of the “Lord.” This adds additional force to the impact that these words are intended to have on the audience. Paul takes very seriously his role as an ambassador of Jesus. His words carry with them the force of authority. What are some ways that you see “authority” of Scripture as challenging the way you live your life?

Where is God in these words?

God is in these words challenging the followers of Jesus to live in a manner that reflects the nature of Jesus. Paul gives a lot of specifics regarding things that are major concerns to the Lord regarding the behavior of some. Paul will challenge his audience to change their ways and to become true agents of grace and forgiveness. What are some ways that you have been inspired by others to be agents of grace and forgiveness?

What does any of this mean for how I live my life?

Paul intends for the words that he gives in this section to be more than just words that his audience thinks about and considers. He intends for these words to be transformative and to initiate change in the depths of their being. There are some very specific challenges that Paul seeks to address. We are not sure whether Paul was concerned about these things because he was aware that they were problems that were prominent in the audience or because he feared they might become prominent. What are some ways that you seek to deal with problems that you see in the community of believers?

What is the word of God calling us to do?

The word of God is here calling for a transformative change in the lives of its audience. Sometimes, as we see the words of Scripture, they can impact our minds, but Paul is calling for something far more to happen here than mere intellectual ascent. He is calling for these words to impact more than the mind. These are words that are intended to initiate change that can be seen in the form of different behavior. What are some ways that you have seen the word of God change behavior?