

## Ephesians – The One Body of Christ

### “Truth in Love”

### Ephesians 4:17-20

Please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 4: 17-32. I would remind you that we're continuing our Amos series this evening, so I'd invite you to come and join us. I will tell you, it is hard as a preacher not to treat this as like one big sermon during the day of Sunday in which I have a new Testament, an Old Testament reading because these two passages in Amos and Ephesians throughout this series, I've noticed, are just like they're talking about each other. So come on this evening and join us for Amos and you can hear from the prophet what it means to be united in Christ, as it were. Okay. But before of course, the coming of Christ. So it's a fascinating passage this evening, but we are this morning in Ephesians 4:17 -32. The Apostle Paul says this...

***Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart, they have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ. Assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him. As the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life, and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self created after the likeness of God, and true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor. For we are members, one of another. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for the building up as fits the occasion. That it may give grace to those who hear and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.***

This is the word of the Lord. Please be seated.

Now Paul is continuing in his letter, really the section that he began at the beginning of this chapter, chapter four, where he called us, remember he besieged us, put us. Do not put on yourself. Would rather walk in a manner that is worthy of your calling. And so he's continuing on in that call to walk in a manner that is worthy of our calling. And the first thing he tells us to do

then in this section is therefore, because you are united in Christ, because you've been given these gifts from the father through Christ who sent His Spirit. Therefore, put off the old self, who you once were, and put on the new self. Now Paul, at many points in this letter has drawn our attention to what we once were.

You remember way back when he said you were once a wash. You were. You were a wash in your trespasses, an ocean of trespasses washing over you. But you're not like that anymore. And notice here he puts another way. Because you were once an old self, you had your old person, but now you have a new person. He's giving new language to this change that's taking place within each one of us.

That we have an old self, an old identity, and now we have a new self, a new person. Elsewhere, he says in the letter to the Galatians, it's no longer I, Paul, who lives, right? That's my old self. He's been put away. But now who Christ lives within me. And it's important for us to remember that as we talk about the new self in this passage today, who is the new self? It is Christ. That's the new self. When Paul talks about the new self, the new man, the spiritual man, the spirit versus the flesh, who is he talking about? He's talking about none other than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But notice Paul says we have to be honest about who we once were. We've got to be honest so that we can discern when the old self is rising up against the new self. And he says this the old self is marked by a resistance to truth, a desire consumed with selfish fulfillment, and ultimately a desire for conflict that always leads to more conflict. You see, Paul, when considering the old self, he's very aware of the incredible pervasiveness of sin in the human heart.

This is what we call in our tradition here at Briarwood Church. This is what we call total depravity. It's actually a very practical doctrine. And what total depravity means is this is that every aspect of your life following the fall is marked by sin. I would point out it does not mean utter depravity. A lot of people think, oh, you mean that everything we do is as wicked as it can be? No, that's not what Total Depravity says. Total depravity says even your best things, because they are not directed towards the glory of God, are marked with depravity, with sin. Even the kindest act has a selfish ambition to it. If you are in rebellion against God. This is Paul, actually, and you're pointing out, and we should remember this, this, this idea that was later called by, Augustine the splendid vices of, the heathen.

He talks about the splendid vices of the heathen. What he means by that is Augustine, who's now living in North Africa. He's reflecting on the Roman Empire. He says, listen, I recognize that the Roman Empire has something to offer us. They have notions of honor. They have notions of courage, notions of glory. And yet he says, but those are not virtues.

They are splendid vices. They appear good. That's what makes them splendid on the outside. They can even be well put together in a well-functioning. But they are ultimately vices, because they are not done to the glory of God. They're not directed towards the worship of the Lord, and so they can't be seen as ultimate goods. They've been infected with the rebellion that we have in Adam.

All of our acts have been infected with them. So even though they might serve us well today, they do not ultimately provide for the glory of God. And so they cannot be seen as ultimate goods. All humanity is in this state. We have all seen wonderful advances in art and in technology and in medicine and in our understanding of the universe.

We don't reject that as Christians. We believe that that is true even when it's an unbeliever who's making the advance. And yet we recognize that these cannot alone be our ultimately good goal, because they are unmoored from the knowledge and the glory of the creator. It's like knowing and understanding a car, right? You see, imagine you're in a garage and you have an automobile there, and you take it apart and you look at every different piece and part of it, and you have an increasingly detailed understanding of how the machine bolts were machined so that they can fit in just the right place, and how the rubber of the tire fits right into the middle of the rim. But you have no idea what the purpose of a vehicle is for. Imagine that. It's almost like you'd be like a toddler sitting in the middle of that garage, kind of just playing with bolts and metal, and you might have an extremely detailed understanding of the different parts, and yet you still don't know how to drive it right.

Ultimately, having a deep understanding of our universe, but being willfully ignorant and neglectful of the creator is like the same kind of thing. You're like that toddler in a garage surrounded by automobile parts, or you're like a person fumbling around in a dark room without knowing the purposes and the desires and the character of the one who designed the situation in which you find yourself.

By the way, the best thinkers in our unbelieving traditions around us recognize that this is true. This is not just Scott read as a Christian saying something. This is actually the current theory of knowledge today out there in the world. If you run in circles of philosophers and, and literary critics and scientists, okay, if you're running out there in that world and you're talking about what can we really know?

I would tell you this, that right now, the invoked theory is that we cannot really know anything in this goes all the way back. There's actually a turning point that happens from time to time. We have sort of a Copernican shift that takes place in science or in philosophy, and we can go back to 1966, when the French philosopher and literary critic Jacques Derrida was giving a lecture in Johns Hopkins, just up the road from where I used to live.

And he stood there in front of a bunch of structuralists. These are people who are trying to come up with a unified theory of everything. You know, that's really the breakthrough with  $EMC$  equals  $MC$  squared. Right? Is that we're connecting energy and mass. And the idea was that if we just think enough, we can connect everything together.

We'll have a unified theory of everything. This is the endeavor of the early part of the 20th century. Jacques Derrida stood up there and said, we will never come to that unified theory because we have no center of truth. We cannot know what is true and what is not. How do I know if where I'm looking right now is where truth is?

It's like the joke of the man who's in the parking lot on a dark night, and a guy drives by and he sees the man staring at the ground and he says, what are you doing in? The man says, I lost my keys. He said, well, is that where you lost your keys? And he goes, no, but the light is better here because he's standing underneath a light post. That's what science and philosophy is. If you are not centered in truth, and I want to tell you, Jacques Derrida is right. If there is no center for truth, but if the creator, if the writer, if the one who has written this novel of human history, who has created this world in which we all live, if that creator, the one who made the car, has reached in from outside of the system and revealed himself, then now we have an anchoring. Now we are moored to truth. Now we have a center out of which to build. You see, without that knowledge and without the desire to glorify him, whatever we do on this earth is incredible of an intellectual, of an endeavor as it might be. Whatever we do on this earth will ultimately fail. We can see a myriad of examples of this.

We got increasingly, increasingly better and better at understanding atomic, the atomic level of reality. And what did we make with it? A bomb right? I can give you other examples. I think about information technology. I know all of you were thinking, we're going to talk about it today. When I come into church, information technology was the greatest creation of information technology until about 30 years ago.

What was the greatest thing? The printing press back in the 1440s, when Gutenberg began the work of this movable type printing press so that you could print out what Bibles he was making Bibles with the printing press. It's a miracle what happened in the 15th century, in 1440. Right. We have we have the printing press in 1492. Of course. You know what happened then? Columbus sails the ocean blue. Then what happens right around the turn of the century in 1517, not unconnected to these other discoveries, we have the Reformation, with the 95 theses being posted up on that door in Wittenberg. Something amazing happened with the printing press. All of a sudden, knowledge was democratized. Democratized. You could have Bibles in your hand, you could read it in your own language. It was incredible what happened. The advances to the church, the Reformation itself, in many ways, can point to the printing press as

one of the reasons. One of the historical causes for why the Reformation took place, when it did. And yet, at the same time.

At the same time, it's not. See, it's not hard to see how sin infiltrated this advance, leading to the propagation of heresies in the church, leading to writings in the world that were increasingly destructive, that led to the death of millions and millions and millions of people during the 20th century. The publishing of the Communist Manifesto, the publishing of Mein Kampf, the expansion of atheism and Social Darwinism all through the printing press.

You see, we took a really good thing that started off, hopefully. And then what do we do? As humans? We have this remarkable ability to just mess things up. That's the doctrine of total depravity. Christians remarkable ability, not just Christian, excuse me? Humans remarkable ability to mess things up. Of course, our next great advance is one that happened recently.

We are kind of coming to a time when things are happening more quickly. But about 30 years ago, in the 1990s, as the internet is born, do you know what happens when the internet is born? Suddenly we all have access around the world to all of this information. I mean, this is the printing press times ten, right? Times a hundred. It's all over the world. I remember smuggling CD-ROMs into countries so that people could have access to Bibles and biblical study resources. And we don't have to do that anymore. They just point their they point their satellite in the right direction. The whole city blocks are all working off of one satellite in some countries, and they put me in the right direction. Guess what? You can get incredible stuff off the internet right there at your fingertips. And yet, due to cunning teachers, and as Paul calls them in our passage last week, those who knew how to use these new tools to advance ideas that were alien to historic Christianity. This is how the health, wealth and prosperity gospel actually spread over the face of the earth.

There were several preachers and teachers who were false teachers who were heretics, and they recognized the value of the internet early on, and they started translating their material and getting it out there. So this church, who's now newly given this gift of the internet, is now getting faced with heresies and apostasy.

This is not even to mention the explosion of pornographic material all over the internet. Not just healthy ideas, but destructive ideas. Because humans have a remarkable ability to mess things up.

Social media is the same. There's nothing inherently evil about it. It's a powerful medium. You can get all kinds of quick ideas across theology. I got a friend who puts out little Hebrew lessons so you can learn Hebrew on social media through little videos. It's really in a powerful tool, and it's fast and it's quick and it moves us along, and you can get a lot of ideas communicated in a short period of time.

And yet, as you know, it is not only constructive, but deconstructive and destructive, because humans have an amazing ability, a remarkable ability to mess things up. This is one of the many current because it's a new problem on dealt with problems in modern Christianity that many even believers, even believers, are caught up in the web of destructive behavior that we see on the internet that we see in social media.

Many believers feel more affection and allegiance to faces on their Twitter screens, to faces on their reels, in their TikTok, than they do to the Christians who are living around them and are dedicated to loving them and carrying them in their current space and their embodied space around them. They are more allegiance to the person who has no investment in their life than they are to those who have loved them, and known them for years and sometimes decades. You see, even Christians can get sucked into this. We have a remarkable ability to mess things up.

But notice what Paul says, and I want to be clear, this is not a fatalistic sermon. This is a hopeful one. Notice what Paul says. You know better. Ephesians. You know better. Look at verse 20, but this, that is not the way that you learned Christ. Okay? This is when he says that that's not what you learned in Christ.

He doesn't say that he says that's not the way you learned Christ, assuming that you have heard about him. And we're taught in him as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life, and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self-created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Put off that groping around in the dark room. Stop being a toddler who's just fiddling around with bolts and nuts and tires out there in the garage, recognize what this world is for. You know the creator. He has laid down his anchor. He has laid down his North Star. He's put the lodestone right here in creation. And that is the Word of God itself.

You now know, as the Westminster Catechism says, what we are to believe concerning God and what duties God requires of men. Put off that old self that's no longer you put on the new self being renewed in the spirit. Paul says, you know better Ephesians and then he makes a case for what the new self looks like. And that draws us to the next section in verse 25 to 29, where Paul really unpacks a kind of profile of the new self he pulls out.

This is a profile of what the new self looks like if you are in Christ, if you have been renewed in the spirit, this is what your life ought to look like. And he lays it out in five different spheres. I call them, okay, five spheres of the new self. Now again, Paul is speaking. This is a is a written letter that's meant to be read in one sitting, which is amazing to us, isn't it?

That's also an effect of the internet and social media. It's hard for us to imagine someone sitting and listening to this letter. It with all of its density being read out in one sitting. Isn't it

incredible? But he doesn't expect this is not meant to be exhaustive. This list, however, this is what is serving the purpose of the argument that he's making in this letter.

And so notice in his five spheres, he lays out five ways that we ought to see change happen. And he talks about change happening and truth change happening in the way that we see anger or mercy change happening in the way that we see property and work. And then finally, a change happening in the way that we see the encouragement of one another.

So let's take a look at this briefly, and I want to point out this does address every aspect of life. Notice how truth addresses our relationships to reality, kind of what Jacques Derrida was getting at in Johns Hopkins back in 1966. Are we about truth, or are we about falsehood? Are we groping around in a dark room, or do we have hold of the roof?

Do we have hold of the anchor line that the Lord has laid down for us? In reality? Truth addresses our relationship to reality. Mercy concerns how we deal with conflict. Property pertains to how we handle material world, the material world around us. Work and labor are related to how we interact with the material and intellectual world and the way that we've been gifted, and how we are stewarding those gifts.

And finally, encouragement gets at that aspect of our life. What are we supposed to be working towards? And that is the building up of the body, the building up of interpersonal relationships. So let's look through these spheres briefly. First of all, let's start with truth. With truth. Look what Paul says in verse 25, therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor.

For we are members, one of another. You see Paul saying, when you put on the new self, it changes your perspective on how you understand your relationship with reality. Before, reality was something that you could manipulate and confuse to your own ends. But now, if you are in Christ, you are in the Trinitarian God. You are connected with the Creator God.

God is a God of truth. You do not see reality now as a tool that you're supposed to use to manipulate to your own ends. But rather truth is a healthy relationship. It is a gift. It is a healthy relationship between you and reality. God, who created the heavens and the earth, is a reality affirming God. It's important that in the Christian tradition this is important.

Compare this with other religious traditions. The importance of speaking the truth about the world around you. This is something we really highlight. Be people of integrity. Don't act one way in private and another way in public. Don't have your inner thoughts that you keep hidden from your outer thoughts. Creating this kind of bifurcated life in which you have one truth that is within you, and another truth that is outside of you, but rather, be a person is wholly and completely committed to reality and having a healthy relationship with reality.

That means recognizing, by the way, that your finite you're limited. You have finitude, right? It's not just your fallenness that hinders your knowledge, but it's your finiteness, your finitude. And so you're open. You're open to hearing truth. God is a God of truth. Do not be afraid, then, of the truth. It actually argue. Christians, mature Christians who have understood this properly don't have to be afraid of any ideology.

You don't have to be afraid of any philosopher. You don't to be afraid of Jacques Derrida. You have to be afraid of them because you serve a God of truth in all truth is his truth. That's why there's so much discussion in the Old Testament about a lack of integrity, a lack of good relationship with reality. Having scales, right, that you're using to measure food out when you're doing a commercial transaction, having scales that don't rightly reflect reality, that say that the bread weighs more than the bread really weighs, or the size of the fish weighs more than the fish really weighs.

Why? So that you can rip off the person who's trying to sell it to you. You see deceitful scales, false measures are ways in which we try to manipulate the perception of reality to obscure what is actually happening in the world around us for our own personal benefit. Notice that even the Ten Commandments, when it talks about lying, it doesn't say do not lie.

What does it say? Do not bear false witness right? Why is that? Because it's assuming a legal context where you are bearing false witness. Why? To oppress another? To bring about your own selfish end. But that's the way the old self acts. The new self speaks the truth. Now of course we don't want to forget. This is all a part of the argument that Paul is making throughout the whole of this chapter.

And remember earlier in this chapter he said, speak the truth. What in love? And I think we have to read this passage in light of that. Two because you can't just speak the truth and not speak the truth and love. As a matter of fact, if you're not speaking the truth in love, then you're not speaking the truth because God is a God of love.

Can I want to challenge you? Because I know some of you are this way. I think I've even said these things before, so I'm just a truth teller. I just call it that as I see it. You know? I just kind of see things. And what are you saying? Really? You're saying I'm a harsh person? I'm a critical person, but I'm a truth teller, and God is a God of truth.

But don't forget what Paul says. He says, don't just speak the truth. You have to speak the truth in love. If you are out there just being a harsh critic, then you are not speaking the truth because that is not how God speaks. You have an obscured relationship with reality. If you are just a critical person. Because you're not speaking the truth in love.

Likewise, let me say you cannot love and not speak the truth. You don't hold back when you're talking to your neighbor about the truth. That's not loving to do that, because, like, I don't want



to bother them. I don't want to offend them. Now, listen, you can be wise, be wise, be persuasive. You know, know when there's some there's something about kind of learning, like when's the right time to bring the thing up, but speak the truth in love.

Love is never withholding of the truth. You are sharing with your neighbor the truth about the world. And that is a sweet, sweet thing. It is a gift. And I know they may not want to hear it, but it's still a gift.

You must speak the truth in love and that is even hard truths. The Bible is filled with hard truths, but it must always be spoken with the purpose of love.

So putting on the new self means changing your relationship with truth. It also means changing your relationship with your anger. Okay, I call this sphere the sphere of mercy. Okay? Because why is that? Because we're talking about anger and not letting anger rule your life. Now, I want to be clear, as we talked about in our Amos series a couple of weeks ago, anger can be a just and right and even godly response to a situation.

Our God is a God of justice as much as he is a God of compassion and grace. He's not half compassion and half justice. He's 100% justice and 100% grace. And we are to be 100% just and 100% gracious. But we should never let one rule over the other. That's why he says, don't let the sun go down on your anger.

Don't let it just rule over you over the course of your life, but be rooted again in mercy, even when you are rightly angered by the things that you see around you. There is such a thing as righteous anger. It's proper to be angry. It's in its proper to be angry at unrighteousness, at injustice. And yet righteous anger is an incredibly precarious and precious thing.

Guard your hearts. Don't be someone who's longing to always be righteously angry. As a matter of fact, as soon as you find yourself being angered, run to mercy because your God runs to mercy and you want to rightly reflect him. See, because of our finitude and our fallenness, because we are limited merely creatures, because we are hindered by sin, the Christian life must be marked by humility and mercy.

You cannot say, as a Christian, I have it all right. I figured it all out and I've got all the answers. And if you don't add up to my standard, then you have failed and I will be angry at you. You don't get to be that way. You can only be angry at what God is angry at, but you also must be as merciful as our self-giving God who gave himself up, that we might receive mercy.

You see, we have seen God's mercy on our own. We have seen how his perfect wrath is quenched and the self-giving gift of grace of Jesus Christ. This is an intimate knowledge for us. If you are a Christian, then you are intimately aware of what it means to be deadly wrong and yet to be shown great mercy. Even while we were still sinners, he gave himself up on the cross.

You see why that's important? He didn't wait around for us to get our act together before giving himself up on the cross. But even while we are still living in rejection to him, he gave himself up on the cross. God was righteously, justly angry, and yet he showed mercy. This is intimate knowledge for us as Christians. You can't act like you don't know about this.

And God is saying through Paul, do the same. Have a transformed relationship with mercy. He then moves on to property and work. I'm gonna handle those two together because I actually think they're very related. Look good, he says, let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

This is an affirmation of personal property. That's true. It's been pointed out before. This is an affirmation in Scripture, and our Scripture does affirm personal property throughout both the old and the New Testament. Even in acts two, where we see the saints giving up of their things for the good of the church, notice it is not a compulsory giving up.

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira is not that they weren't willing to give it up, it's that they lied to the spirit about what they were giving up. That's their sin. It's not compulsory. It's rather gifts of love, just as we do here in this morning at Brownwood Presbyterian Church. Where are we doing? It's not compulsory, but we are giving gifts of love.

We're building up one another. But the Bible over and over again affirms this idea of personal property. I'd actually say this is rooted in Genesis one, where we are called to go form and fill the earth. What does that mean? That means just as God has made the earth to be his, he now gives it to humanity. And he says, go out now.

Take responsibility for it. Take your lot, the thing that you've been given, and steward it to the glory of God. Private property is unto that end. Now can that be abused? Absolutely.

And that's why we should remember that our personal property is never ours alone. But it is always a gift of God to be stewarded. Well, we call ownership as humans because we recognize the Creator God. What we call ownership as humans is actually stewardship. You've been loaned a thing from a king and he said, go work with your loan.

I want to see you develop it. I want to see that it was a good investment to give it to you. So you ask yourself, I have a lot of property. That's a good thing. That's a blessed thing. What is the Lord calling you to do with it? How is he calling you to steward it well and notice work is an extension of that.

Therefore you can't steal from another person because if you steal from another person, then what are you doing? You're depriving them of their ability to steward what the Lord has given them to his glory. So you can't steal from a person. And yes, we are talking about interpersonal

thievery. We're talking about systemic thievery and systems of government, unjust taxation, corrupt financial practices.

These are all kinds of thievery. You can't do that because you're taking away from someone their right and their responsibility. Indeed, the gift that they have to steward their property towards the Lord to his glory. But rather work those who he says work honestly, do honest work to accrue for yourself property so that what you might give it out as a good steward to others who are in need.

You see work as an extension of property. Work exists in the garden. We are all. Again, I like to just point out places where Christianity is unique. Okay, so I hope you're you're okay with that. But Christianity is also unique, not just in that we love truth. Okay, crude Christianity is also unique in this way. We do not see that work as a result of man's sin of humanity's fall.

Do you realize they are working in the garden before the fall? Work is a beautiful thing. The suffering associated with work, the sweat of the brow that comes about because of sin. But work itself is a God glorifying, God emerging thing to do. So Paul says, go work honestly. Steward your gifts and your talents for the benefit of others.

You might say, well, it's hard for me to. I'm just a guy on an assembly line. It's hard for me to see how my work helps anybody. Okay. Or you might say something like, I'm a guy who runs a company and the company has no kind of obvious Christian connection or overlap or something like that. It's just a thing, you know, we do a thing and you might say, how is that glorifying to God is glorifying to God because you are, by nature of your work, not only dignifying yourself, your family, perhaps, are you care for the other people who benefit or rely on you to do your thing so that they can do the

thing that they need to do? That's why even the guy who just his whole job all day is, is to put rivets in sheet metal. Okay. You might say, well, what am I doing to the glory of God? Well, because the next guy down the assembly line needs you to have done your job well. You're creating value for other people.

Reminds me of a story I heard. I had a good friend, former student who was an NFL player. He's a successful NFL player, and it's a couple of Super Bowl rings. And he became a Christian while he was playing in the NFL, and he was talking to a friend of his who was a much even more famous football player.

And I won't say names because this is their private conversation, not mine. But I'm going to go ahead and share with you what they said. And he was talking to this more famous football player, and he had just become a believer. And he's kind of wrestling with, what am I doing? What am I doing playing a game as an adult man?

Like, is this really doing anything? And he goes to this much more famous player and he says he ever thought about what this is like, what are we doing here in the answer that the guy gave him, even though he's not a believer, I thought was remarkably wise. He didn't say, well, I'm showing that I'm the best in my field.

You know, he's not saying I'm showing the glory of human achievement. He doesn't say that. He says, I think that our jobs here are to create value. There are families tens, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of families who have food on the table because of what we are doing here. There are men and women who are able to come home and provide for their families.

There are other companies and industries that spring up around our industry, and it creates value. It creates prosperity for people who are connected to the thing that we're doing. And we're just a cog. We're just a no. He doesn't mean that in a negative way. We're just a part of that much broader endeavor. And I thought, that's a really interesting thing to say.

That is not what I would have expected from a star NFL player. And yet he recognized, actually, this is where the real value is and what we're doing. You see, it's a good thing to work and to work well and to have our work benefit those around us. Finally, Paul ends with this putting on the new self means transforming your perspective on encouragement.

Grace says in verse 29, let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only that which is good for building up as fits the occasion. I like that he puts that in there. Be wise as fits the occasion. You're not just supposed to always be out there encouraging. There going to be times when maybe you should hold back, okay.

But as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear, I want to be clear, it is not a gift of God to merely see what is wrong with the other people around you. Okay, it is not a gift of God to merely be critical of those around you. I know you might think it is.

You might be one of those people. Like I like tough love. I like hold on to tough love. Okay, I that's okay. Make sure the love is really there. And it's not just all tough, okay? You see, our calling is to improve, to build, to increase the person, to process the situation around us.

It is true that because of sin, everything we do, even as Christians, is still marked by sin. Everything we do has that, and we see that in the church regularly. We see that in our Bible studies. We see that in our families, everything that we do, we still have this remarkable ability to mess things up. And yes, we.

Yet we have to recognize that is our job to build one another up in dignity. I would point this out. We don't give each other dignity. You have dignity as a redeemed image bearer of God. You have dignity. It is our job to recognize that dignity and the way that we build one another up. Now, what do we see happening here in verses 30 to 32?

This is Paul ending this whole broader talk that he's been giving on walking in a manner that is worthy of our calling or putting off the old self, putting on the new. He now comes to the end. And I think these last couple of verses here, 30 to 32, are just a summary. He's summarizing for us. Then what is he calling us to do?

And he puts it this time in the negative before he said, walk in a manner worthy. That's positive. Put on the new self. That's positive. What does he say now? Don't grieve the spirit. Don't grieve the spirit. Paul knows that I can't create my new self within me. I already have it because the spirit indwells me. I can't walk in a manner worthy of my calling if I haven't been effectually called by the spirit.

So because I've already attained these things, it's not something that I'm trying to attain. I've already been given it. I can't lose my salvation. I've already been given my salvation in the spirit. How do I know? This goes all the way back to chapter one? Because you've been assured by the spirit that is, become a seal for you and your redemption.

Therefore, what's the threat? It's not to lose my salvation, Christian, but it is to be alienated from the experience of the benefits of my redemption. Grieving the spirit is not me losing a thing that I once had. But you can't lose your salvation if you are in Christ. Behold, you are a new creation and God doesn't make mistakes.

You're a new creation.

But don't alienate yourself from the benefits of that new creation, from the benefits of that redemption. Paul is saying, if you are in the spirit, don't grieve the spirit. Relish your redemption, bask in your salvation, bask in your relationship with the God of the universe so that you're not. You recognize I'm not someone who is walking around in a dark room, fumbling around with the machine bolts of a car, but rather I know what this world is for and I can bask in it.

Swim in the wholeness that Christ has won for you in his great, self-giving, active act of taking your place in his death, so that you may receive the benefits of his resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the spirit through His spirit. Jesus is your new self, who you are putting on. Relish him, bask in him, seek after him in repentance and faith.

Therefore, Paul says, put away that selfish anger that grieves the spirit, but rather what as many of us sang when we were children, be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another. That's a summary of everything he's just said in verse four. This is what it looks like. Be kind. Be tenderhearted. Forgive one another. Why not? Because I'm trying to gain my salvation.

Because I've already got it. It's already yours. Just as God in Christ has forgiven you. Let's pray that Christ would draw us to such a life of the new self. Please join me.

Heavenly father, we pray that you would watch over us. Help us, Lord to the power of the spirit to put off that old self and to put on the new. We pray, Lord, it's hard for us. It seems tiring. Dear Lord, energize us, invigorate us in the spirit that we would seek after you, that we might glorify your name in the name of Christ alone. It's in his name we pray. Amen.