

Notes: *Become What You Are* (Ephesians 4:25-32)

Intro: God's law is freeing for the child of God because it resonates with the new mind and heart God has given him. It directs us in a life that is pleasing to God and fulfilling to the believer. That is why in his NT letters, Paul not only teaches Christians about their new identity as spiritually risen people but also drills them in ethics—that is, in how God's law applies to their lives. Having instructed us at length in the first three chapters about the new creation we are through faith union with Jesus Christ, Paul now applies the law and exhorts us to walk accordingly. Here we see that holiness is not expressed only privately in our relationship with God but also corporately in our relationships with each other. In those relationships, we must daily put off the old thinking and behavior that belongs to the old life of bondage to sin and put on the new thinking and behavior that corresponds to the new life of freedom by God's Spirit. We must become in action what we already are in our new mind and heart. *As God's new creation ...*

#1: We must put off falsehood and put on truth. Basic to human relationships is telling the truth. Recently the news has reminded us that tweaking the truth can harm a nation's business and economy. Hiding the truth can destroy a marriage and family. *Why is truth a basic part of human relationships?* Simply this—God has created man in his image (Gen 1:26-27). Humans are like God as no other earthly creatures are. God's ways and words are always true, reliable, and faithful and God intended that those of man in his image should be too. *Why is falsehood now a basic part of human relationships?* Because of the reality of the devil. Just as God is the source of truth, so Satan is the source of falsehood. He is the father of lies. Deception entered the human race when Eve followed by Adam believed Satan's lies rather than God's truth. Because they obeyed the devil, Adam and Eve began to reflect the Devil's thinking, words, and ways. And further, since they are the head of the race, they involved us as their natural descendents in their fall. "In Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22). As a result, all of us as sons and daughters of Adam come by falsehood easily. Many deny the importance of truth in human relationships but that denial cannot be carried through consistently. C.S. Lewis: "Whenever you find a man who says he does not believe in a real Right and Wrong, you will find the same man going back on this a moment later. He may break his promise to you, but if you try breaking one to him he will be complaining "It's not fair" before you can say Jack Robinson." Courts, contracts, guarantees, marriages—every social arrangement of daily life—requires truthfulness, faithfulness, integrity for its success! Telling the truth is basic to the church's existence since, like members of the body, we are joined to one another. But falsehood creates division by sowing seeds of mistrust. When truth disappears the body's strength weakens.

#2: We must put off unrighteous anger and put on righteous anger. Anger is the passionate rising up of the heart against a perceived wrong or injustice that bars us from some desired good. It may surprise us that Paul can speak of righteous anger and that it may even be necessary for the long-term health of the body of Christ! *What is righteous anger?* Scores of biblical texts speak of the just anger of God against the wicked and even his own people when they harden their hearts against him and walk in disobedience. Jesus was angry on several occasions. When the Pharisees resisted his ministry because of their lack of compassion Mark says: "he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart." There is a great need in the church for this kind of righteous anger. How prone the church is to tolerate evil in a way that God is not. If evil arouses God's anger, it should arouse ours too. *What is unrighteous*

anger? Anger that controls us, dominates or becomes an obsession with us is never healthy. A popular motto is “express thy self.” But thankfully most counselors have dropped the idea that giving full vent to one’s anger is every helpful. Anger that controls is evident when we cling to anger. Anger that is nursed deadens the spirit. Sproul advocates asking the simple question “Why are you angry?” The point is not defend ourselves but address a person’s “hurt” which is often behind their anger. Let us avoid giving the devil an opportunity in our lives or in others. Anger is an acid that destroys its container.

#3: We must put off cursing and put on blessing. Speech is a wonderful gift of God. Like other aspects of our makeup it is part of his image in us. He speaks and so do we. Our words possess great power. While we cannot create a world out of nothing as God’s words can, our words do have power to tear down or build up. How great is the responsibility of possessing the image of God! *Our words may tear down.* “corrupt” is literally “rotten.” Rotten language is dishonest, unedifying, or vulgar language. It encourages rottenness and corruption in the listeners. *Our words must build up.* We can “give grace to those who hear!” With our new nature by God’s Spirit we can represent Christ to others by words! We must work to develop new standards of speaking.