



**Sunday School Lesson**  
**Eph. 4:25 - 5:5**  
 by Lorin L. Cranford  
 All rights reserved ©

**Living Like Jesus**



A copy of this lesson is posted in Adobe pdf format at <http://cranfordville.com> under Bible Studies in the Bible Study Aids section. A note about the [blue, underlined](#) material: These are hyperlinks that allow you to click them on and bring up the specified scripture passage automatically while working inside the pdf file connected to the internet. Just use your web browser's back arrow or the taskbar to return to the lesson material.

**Quick Links to the Study**

**I. Context**

- a. [Historical](#)
- b. [Literary](#)

**II. Message**

- a. [Speaking Truthfully, 4:25-29](#)
- b. [Not Grieving the Spirit, 4:30-32](#)
- c. [Imitating God, 5:1-5](#)

This lesson is the third in the series "Life in the Light" in the Formations lessons from Smyth-Helwys, and is the second one taken from Ephesians in this five part series. Because of a [previous Bible study](#) from Ephesians, we will use relevant materials from that study in the background of this study.

**I Context**



## a. Historical

The book of Ephesians is traditionally understood as a circular letter from Paul while he was imprisoned during the last phase of his ministry before martyrdom, sometime during the late 50s to the early 60s. Most often the place of imprisonment has been considered to be Rome (61-62 AD), but other possibilities exist, mainly during the period of imprisonment in Caesarea Philippi before being shipped to Rome (cf. Acts 23:23-26:32; 58-59 AD). For details of this see <http://cranfordville.com/paul-chr.htm> under Paul's Final Period of Ministry and also [.../paul-pris.htm](http://cranfordville.com/paul-pris.htm).

By circular letter is meant that this document was carried by Tychicus (Eph. 5:21-22), an associate of Paul, first to Ephesus where it was read to the various house church groups over the city. Then, he carried the letter to other nearby towns, such as Colossae etc., where the letter was also read to the different house church groups. The indication of this is found in the absence of the words "in Ephesus" at 1:1 (ἐν Ἐφέσῳ) in some of the earliest and most important copies of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament (P<sup>46</sup> & B etc.). The reader of these kinds of ancient Greek letters would simply insert orally the appropriate geographical indication when reading this part of the text.

The Christian community at Ephesus had its beginnings with a brief stop by Paul at the end of the second missionary (Acts 18:18-22), where Priscilla and Aquila stayed behind and developed the work in the early 50s. On the third missionary journey, Paul spent over two years in ministry (Acts 19:8,10; 20:31) from about 53 to 54 AD. In the traditional understanding of Ephesians, Paul is now writing this letter to them either from Caesarea (58-59 AD) or from Rome (61-62 AD).

The Christian community at Ephesus enjoyed a lengthy ministry from the apostle Paul, and also from the apostle John who spent most of his later years (60s to 90s) in ministry there. The Christian movement gradually made significant impact on the city and by the third century AD had become a major center of Christian activity. Thus the work of Paul and John laid an important foundation for a witness for Christ that would last for hundreds of years in this area.

## b. Literary

Now for the literary setting of our passage. The Ephesian letter follows ancient letter writing patterns reasonably close and thus falls into the following divisions:

***Praescriptio*** (introductory materials): 1:1-2

The sender, recipients and greeting are contained in these initial two verses.

***Proem*** (prayer expressions): 1:3-23

Comprised of two major sections, this passage begins with an eloquent praise to God in one long sentence in the Greek (1:3-14), and then moves to a more traditional prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for the readers (1:15-23).

***Body of the letter***: 2:1-6:22

**The first major segment** (2:1-3:21) focuses on the marvelous redemptive work of God through Christ Jesus that has lifted us out of sin and into spiritual union and fellowship with Almighty God. This is brought to a grand climax with another doxology of praise in 3:14-21.

**The second major segment** (4:1-6:22) focuses on moral exhortation, technically known as paranesis. The 'how we should live' emphasis here flows naturally from the 'who we are spiritually' first section in chapters two and three. Christian living has to be based upon spiritual relationship to the Heavenly Father for it to be authentic.

This second major division of the letter body falls into several natural units of text material, known as pericopes: (1) 4:1-16 (Christian unity as the collective Body of Christ); (2) 4:17-24 (The Old and New Ways of Living); (3) 4:25-5:5 (**Guidelines for the New Way of Living**); (4) 5:6-21 (Walking as Children of Light); (5) 5:22-6:9 (Living as a Christian Family); (6) 6:10-22 (Doing Battle with Evil).

***Conclusio***: 6:23-24

The concluding prayer of blessing for peace and grace.

For further details see <http://cranfordville.com/letlstp.htm>.

Thus, our passage -- 4:29-5:5 -- stands as the third major segment of the second section of the body

of the letter. The bulk of the second division of the letter body stands as paraenetical material giving admonitions to distinctive ways of living as a Christian. Such emphasis upon high moral standards was not common in the ancient Greco-Roman world. These emphases gave to Christians a challenge to rise far above the level of morality of their non-christian neighbors. Only in Stoic philosophy would one find emphasis upon similar levels of moral living. For more details on the subject of [paraenesis](#) see the numerous articles on this subject in our [News From the Blue Ridge](#) beginning with the [October 2003](#) column of Lorin's Musings.

## II. Message

The passage naturally divides itself into three natural segments, each with a "header" statement: (1) 4:25-29 [H=v. 25], "Speaking truthfully"; (2) 4:30-32 [H=v.30] "Not Grieving the Spirit"; and (3) 5:1-5 [H=v. 1] "Imitating God". The [Block Diagram](#) of the Greek text clearly reflects this natural arrangement of thoughts, even though English translations tend to obscure it severely.

### a. Speaking Truthfully, 4:25-29

#### GNT

<4:25> Διὸ ἀποθέμενοι τὸ ψεῦδος λαλεῖτε ἀλήθειαν ἕκαστος μετὰ τοῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων μέλη. <4:26> ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἀμαρτάνετε· ὁ ἥλιος μὴ ἐπιδυέτω ἐπὶ [τῷ] παροργισμῷ ὑμῶν, <4:27> μηδὲ δίδοτε τόπον τῷ διαβόλῳ. <4:28> ὁ κλέπτων μηκέτι κλεπτέτω, μᾶλλον δὲ κοπιᾷ τῷ ἐργαζόμενος ταῖς [ιδίαις] χερσὶν τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἵνα ἔχη μεταδιδόναι τῷ χρείαν ἔχοντι. <4:29> πᾶς λόγος σαπρὸς ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν μὴ ἐκπορευέσθω, ἀλλὰ εἴ τις ἀγαθὸς πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν τῆς χρείας, ἵνα δῶ χάριν τοῖς ἀκούουσιν.

#### NASB

25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. 26 BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity. 28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. 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, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

#### NRSV

25 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. 26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not make room for the devil. 28 Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. 29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.

#### NLT

25 So put away all falsehood and "tell your neighbor the truth" because we belong to each other. 26 And "don't sin by letting anger gain control over you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a mighty foothold to the Devil. 28 If you are a thief, stop stealing. Begin using your hands for honest work, and then give generously to others in need. 29 Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

#### Notes:

When one looks carefully at the thought flow in these verses the central theme emerges as having to do with speech. The beginning (v. 25) and concluding (v. 29) admonitions deal with our speaking. Between these are admonitions dealing with attitudes (v. 26-27, anger) and action (v. 28, working).

The foundation for these admonitions rests on the principles expressed in the immediately preceding pericope of [4:17-24](#), especially vv. 22-24. The conjunction "so then" (Διὸ) in v. 25 sets up vv. 25ff. as growing out of these declarations in 4:17-24 (NRSV):

17 Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. 19 They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. 20 That is not the way you learned Christ! 21 For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. 22 You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Paul emphasized that the Ephesian Christians by virtue of their Christian commitment had placed themselves under heavy obligation to distance themselves from their former pagan way of living. In their Christian life, the new way of living is described (vv. 22-24) in terms of a spiritual sandwich:

**Top layer of bread:** put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts

**Meat in between:** be renewed in the spirit of your minds

**Bottom layer of bread:** clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

The “two slices of bread” are couched in terms of a decisive action (Aorist infinitives in the Greek) using the metaphor of getting undressed [ἀποθέσθαι] and then getting dressed [ἐνδύσασθαι]. At conversion our commitment to Christ is to shed our old life and to begin a brand new life. Baptism symbolizes this commitment. The “meat” in the sandwich is expressed as a present tense infinitive in the Greek [ἀνανεοῦσθαι], indicating that the renewing is to be an ongoing process rather than one decisive action. Once we have made the decision to follow Christ, God unleashes a process enabling us to gain an increasingly new way of thinking about life, about right and wrong, about religious duty.

Such foundation is essential to the moral admonitions that follow, since they define aspects of the new clothes that we have put on in our Christian conversion. These patterns of behavior are intended to naturally grow out of our spiritual relationship to Christ. Without such a foundation, the moral admonitions quickly creep over into a shallow legalistic “do-goodism” that has more affinity with the Pharisees than with Jesus. Then one has to lift himself up “by his own bootstraps” in moral behavior in order to try to please God -- something Paul found impossible to do as a Pharisee. The radicalness of Christian conversion -- for Paul on the Damascus road ([Acts 9:1-19](#)) -- is the exclusive foundation to authentic Christian morality. This is just as true today, as it was in AD 33 when Paul first met Jesus outside Damascus.

One of the first areas of change that Paul talks about has to do with our speech. The words that we say carry a high level of importance. Two things are stressed about our speech. First, we strip out the use of lying (the getting undressed metaphor from v. 22), and begin speaking truthfully (NRSV): “So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.”

As Bratcher and Nida (*A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*) remind us, “The language here ‘but speak the truth each one with his neighbor’ is derived from Zechariah 8.16; here ‘neighbor’ has the meaning fellow Christian, fellow believer.” As this [Old Testament passage](#) declares, thus Paul emphasizes that Christians must follow the same path (NRSV):

16 These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace, 17 do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath; for all these are things that I hate, says the Lord.

The stress is made individually, thus raising the bar on how important it is for each member of the Christian community to be truthful with fellow Christians. This is the starting point. We begin with truthfulness to one another as Christians. This pattern will then extend to all our relationships, including non-Christians.

The second emphasis upon our speech comes at the end of the passage in verse 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, so that it will give grace to those who hear.” In addition to truthfulness in our speech, we need to incorporate wholesomeness in it as well. Once again the negative is followed by the positive, playing off the getting undressed/getting dressed foundation in vv. 22-24. The sense of the Greek text (πᾶς λόγος σαπρὸς ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν μὴ ἐκπορευέσθω) is captured quite well in the New Living Translation's rendering:



“Don’t use foul or abusive language.” Nida and Bratcher in their comments to help professional Bible translators again provide some helpful insight:

The writer here takes up the matter of conversation; he forbids *harmful words*, literally “every rotten word.” The adjective is used literally of spoiled fish (Matt 13.48) and of rotten fruit (Matt 12.33; Luke 6.43). This means not simply idle talk that is normally neutral, but evil, filthy “foul talk” (JB), “bad language” (NEB). It may be difficult to speak of *harmful words*, since words themselves do not appear to be harmful in the sense of causing direct physical harm to people. Sometimes, however, one can speak of “words that cause trouble” or even “words that are only bad”

In other words our mouths must never become a verbal sewer spewing out filth. All of us have been around individuals whose language was like this. Nothing but filth and foul language flows out of their mouths. Such has no place in the life of a Christian; it contradicts his/her very commitment to Christ.

The “getting dressed” action is to replace rotten words with edifying words. Nida-Bratcher’s comments are insightful for this side of the emphasis as well:

What follows in Greek is literally “but if (there is) any good (word) for building up of need.” This good language is the kind that builds up; it is *helpful*, constructive, beneficial. *Helpful words* may be “words that do good for people.” In some cases, however, one cannot use a term which specifies merely isolated words. What is meant are statements. The first part of verse 29 may be translated as “Do not say what causes harm but only say what is good for people” or “What you say must not be something which causes something bad but what you say must be that which causes something good.” Then the phrase *the kind that build up* may be rendered as “that which does good to people” or “that which helps people”

Instead of our speech tearing people down, it is to build them up. This doesn’t preclude the need of severe critique, but does underscore the importance of our communications being targeted to helping people become better individuals.

Between these two slices of “speech bread” lie the “meat” of attitude and action, vv. 26-28: “26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not make room for the devil. 28 Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.”

First, the issue of anger surfaces in vv. 26-27. The fourfold admonition begins with a set of positive/negative admonitions: “Be angry, and do not sin” [ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε]. Both of these are couched as present tense imperatives in the Greek, meaning that they address anger not as a flash point of expression -- our so-called ‘burst of anger’ -- but as an ongoing attitude that leads to actions. The admonition is to become an angry person. The second admonition limits that anger to actions that don’t constitute sinful activities. The third and fourth admonitions continue to impose limitations on our anger. We are not to let the sun go down on our anger. Neither are we to give place to the devil. What is Paul getting at here?

One of the more insightful interpretations of these admonitions is provided by John R. Yoder Neufeld (*Believers Church Bible Commentary*, iPreach). It is reproduced in full here for clarity’s sake:

At first glance, the prohibition *not to sin* in relation to anger seems to be mostly negative: readers are *not to sin*, *not to let the sun go down on their anger*, and *not to give room for the devil*. When read this way, these verses anticipate the prohibition of anger or wrath in 4:31 (cf. Col. 3:8; James 1:19–20). Nursed or unresolved anger appears to be the central concern. To paraphrase: Deal with your anger before the sun sets, or the devil will get a foothold in your life! This is, however, not the only or even the best understanding of the text.

The prohibition not to sin in relation to anger is taken verbatim from the Greek translation (LXX) of *Psalms 4:4*. In the Hebrew, the Psalm text is a warning against sinning when angry, and that is how translators render the Psalm text (NIV: *In your anger do not sin*; NRSV: *When you are disturbed [or angry], do not sin*.) In short, deal with your anger before it becomes sin! The Greek, however, has an imperative: *Be angry, but do not sin!* Ephesians evidently employs the Greek version of the Psalm.

One way of explaining this strange text is to understand the imperative as a “concessive” imperative, and thus not really an imperative at all: *Be angry [if you must], but do not sin* (so NIV, NAB, NJB; Barth, 1974:513; Best, 1998:449; Lincoln: 301; Schnackenburg, 207). In this case there is no real difference between the Greek and the Hebrew text of *Psalms 4:4*. The following clause *Do not let the sun set on your anger* only reinforces the urgency of dealing quickly with anger. In this interpretation it is anger that is the problem (cf.

4:31!). And it is sin not to get anger out of the way by sundown. Such anger is an open door through which the devil will find entry.

An alternative interpretation emerges, however, when careful attention is given to the vocabulary of the second sentence in verse 26, in particular the term usually translated as anger—*parorgismos*—which appears only here in noun form in the NT, but several times in the Greek OT. It is best translated as “provocation to anger” rather than “anger” (this is even the case in Jer. 21:5, where it can very well denote God’s furious baiting of Zedekiah; contra Lincoln: 302). That is also its meaning when it appears in verb form in Ephesians 6:4 : Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger!

If *parorgismos* is translated in 4:26 as “that which provokes to anger,” then the focus shifts from anger to that which provokes it. The problem is “out there,” an objective offense that requires a response, and not the emotional response to that offense. The devil gains a foothold less through anger than through leaving the provocation to anger in place past sundown.

Whose anger is being provoked? On one hand, the command to be angry in verse 26 suggests that it is the readers who are to deal with what has provoked them to anger. Without attributing any inherent value to anger, there are things that will and should anger those whose view of life is shaped by the new human, the indwelling Christ. Injustice and falsehood are provocations to those who have been created for justice and truth (4:24). More importantly, however, such violations of God’s will provoke God’s anger or wrath. God’s judgment urges dealing with such matters before sundown.

That understanding of God’s will and wrath raises questions: Is it the neighbor’s provocation of yourself and/or of God that must be pointed out and dealt with? Or is it your own provocations to anger that must be confessed and corrected? (cf. Ecclus./Sirach 5:4–7!). In either case, these provocations should be dealt with immediately.

Ephesians 4:25–26 should be seen as part of a tradition running from Leviticus 19 to Qumran and to Matthew 18 (so also Gnilya: 235–6; TBC). It sees sin as provocation to anger, most importantly, God’s wrath. It also draws the implications of Leviticus 19:17 for life in the communal new human. In the process, one of the most central concerns of the law—the love of neighbor—has moved to the center of the elaboration of life in the new human (2:11–22, notes on the ongoing relevance of the law).

In this way of coming at the text, we see the necessity of anger as the divinely mandated response to sinfulness in our world. God’s anger certainly exists against it and will be expressed in its full fury at the last day, as well as occasionally in our day. We who claim Him as Father should be equally provoked by human sinfulness.

The second layer of “meat” in our spiritual sandwich -- maybe we should label it a BigMac -- is the negative/positive set of admonitions in verse 28: “Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.” Here our actions are addressed. More specifically, a certain group of people is addressed in the admonition: thieves [ὁ κλέπτων, ho klepton]. PHEME PERKINS (“Ephesians,” *New Interpreter’s Bible*, iPreach) has some helpful observations about this set of admonitions:

The need to engage in manual work (v. 28), indicated in the catalogs of Paul’s hardships by the phrases “in toil and hardship” (2 Cor 11:27) or “the work of our own hands” (1 Cor 4:12); “working for a living” (1 Cor 9:6); and “worked night and day” (1 Thess 2:9), describes the situation of the majority of believers (1 Cor 1:26). They are to provide for themselves and others rather than seek to live off the largess of wealthy patrons (1 Thess 4:11-12; 2 Thess 3:6-13). Some interpreters suggest that the original warning against stealing also spoke to particular social issues.<sup>264</sup> Slaves or other servants were commonly accused of theft (e.g., Titus 2:10; Phlm 18). Thus this advice ensures the respectable behavior of Christians who are not among the elite and whose affiliation with the new religious movement might render them suspect.

The general point emphasizes the importance of positive contribution to the community. We contribute to helping others, not live off the labors of other people. This focus on others is a part of the new humanity brought about by conversion to Christ.

This section, vv. 25-29, then lays a solid foundation for a new way of living for the Christian. The new person coming out of conversion must be concerned about his/her words, attitudes and actions. A real difference should surface in these areas, revealing the significance of Christ and His presence in the

believer's life.

### b. Not Grieving the Spirit, 4:30-32

GNT	NASB	NRSV	NLT
<p>&lt;4:30&gt; καὶ μὴ λυπεῖτε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἐν ᾧ ἐσφραγίσθητε εἰς ἡμέραν ἀπολυτρώσεως. &lt;4:31&gt; πᾶσα πικρία καὶ θυμὸς καὶ ὀργὴ καὶ κραυγὴ καὶ βλασφημία ἀρθήτω ἀφ' ὑμῶν σὺν πάσῃ κακίᾳ. &lt;4:32&gt; γίνεσθε [δὲ] εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοί, εὐσπλαγχοί, χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς, καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν.</p>	<p>30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.</p>	<p>30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. 31 Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, 32 and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.</p>	<p>30 And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he is the one who has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.</p>

#### Notes:

The second cluster of admonitions begins with the header encouragement to not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. John Yoder (*Believers Church Bible Commentary*, iPreach) helps set the stage for understanding this initial admonition:

Verse 30 is a clear and unambiguous warning not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. That exhortation can stand on its own, and it is often read that way. Pauline writing often groups exhortations that do not have any relationship to each other. That does not take away from their importance. It only means that there is no clear progression of thought or logic.

Nevertheless, there is ample reason to interpret this warning in the larger context of life as the new human. For one, the exhortation touches on the power that undergirds living as the new human. Second, the emphasis on speech in both the preceding and immediately following verses reflect the close relationship between Spirit and speech elsewhere in this letter (5:18–19; 6:17; cf. e.g., Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 14; 1 Thes. 5:18–19).

To be sure, paraenesis in the ancient world was sometimes given in random, disjointed admonitions without clearly defined thought progression. But such is not the case here. The critical role that the Holy Spirit is to play in the believer's behavior cannot be denied. It is only through the divine, empowering presence that Christians find the resources to live the way God expects us to live. Thus, to disregard that presence is more than sinful; it is a recipe for spiritual and moral disaster. The Holy Spirit's presence in our lives is the seal, the mark, that we belong to Christ and will stand safe in the day of judgment before Almighty God. The NLT captures the sense of the Greek quite well with its rendering: "he is the one who has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption." Thus, we need to reflect a sensitivity to the Spirit's leadership over our daily lives. When so done, good things rather than bad things will result. The catalogue of vices in verse 31 can be effectively resisted. The virtues in verse 32 can be incorporated into our living. The "spiritual sandwich" principle is still controlling the thought structure.

In the vice/virtue lists here we see a reflection of [Col. 3:8-13](#) in particular (NRSV):

8 But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices 10 and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. 11 In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other;

just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

In verse 31, Paul lists several things that must be removed from our lives. These reflect the “old self” [τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον] mentioned in 4:22, and thus now have no rightful place in our lives. These things are “all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander” [πᾶσα πικρία καὶ θυμὸς καὶ ὀργὴ καὶ κραυγὴ καὶ βλασφημία] along with “all malice” [σὺν πάσῃ κακίᾳ]. Pheme Perkins (*New Interpreter’s Bible*, iPreach) provides an insightful summation:

These vices all refer back to anger (ὀργίζομαι *orgizomai*, v. 26) and the behavior it causes. Concern to rise above anger and its manifestations forms a common element in both Greco-Roman and Jewish exhortation.

Certain positive traits will replace these vices reflecting the old way of living in paganism. These virtues are listed in verse 32: “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you” [γίνεσθε δὲ εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοί, εὐσπλαγχνοί, χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς, καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν]. Both disposition and action are specified, and stand mostly as opposites of the above vices. The listed vices tear down relationships; the virtues listed here build up relationships in a healing manner. The degree of our attitude and actions is specified as to the extent that God has forgiven us in Christ. Until we have shown mercy and forgiveness to that extent, we haven’t fully measured up to the expected standard.

Again, we can clearly see the critical role of the Holy Spirit in both resisting tendencies of the old self and the incorporation of these virtues. Without His help, we will never measure up!

### c. Imitating God, 5:1-5

#### GNT

<5:1> γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητά <5:2> καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας. <5:3> πορνεία δὲ καὶ ἀκαθαρσία πᾶσα ἢ πλεονεξία μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω ἐν ὑμῖν, καθὼς πρέπει ἀγίοις, <5:4> καὶ αἰσχροῦτης καὶ μωρολογίας ἢ εὐτραπείας, ἃ οὐκ ἀνῆκεν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εὐχαριστίας. <5:5> τοῦτο γὰρ ἴστε γινώσκοντες, ὅτι πᾶς πόρνος ἢ ἀκάθαρτος ἢ πλεονέκτης, ὃ ἐστὶν εἰδωλόατρης, οὐκ ἔχει κληρονομίαν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ.

#### NASB

1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 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. 3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

#### NRSV

5.1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, 2 and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 3 But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints. 4 Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk; but instead, let there be thanksgiving. 5 Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

#### NLT

5.1 Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. 2 Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him. 3 Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. 4 Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes – these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. 5 You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is really an idolater who worships the things of this world.

#### Notes:

This final section lifts the bar considerably, as well as continues the general emphasis of the entire passage. The header statement in 5:1, “be imitators of God, as beloved children” [γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητά], sets the standard. Our conversion has brought us into God’s family. Now, our



responsibility is to follow in the footsteps of our Heavenly Father. As PHEME PERKINS (*New Interpreter's Bible*, iPreach) observes, Paul makes extensive use of imitation language:

Paul uses this imitation pattern regularly. Christians may be encouraged to imitate other churches (1 Thess 2:14) or Christ (1 Thess 1:6). However, his most common usage follows the philosophic example of the child imitating a parent. Thus Paul underlines the “father in Christ”/“child” relationship between himself and those churches he founded (1 Cor 4:14; 11:1; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:6). The phrase “as beloved children” in v. 1b recalls this pattern. Christians routinely refer to themselves as children of God (Rom 5:5; Gal 4:5-6; 8:15; Phil 2:15; “destined for adoption,” Eph 1:5). However, the injunction to imitate God does not appear elsewhere in the NT. Philo does, however, speak of imitating God in the context of those who have power to rule others. They ought to copy God's beneficence: “The best is to use all their energies to assist people and not to injure them; for this is to act in imitation of God, since he also has the power to do either good or evil, but his inclination causes him only to do good. And the creation and arrangement of the world shows this.”<sup>273</sup>

Thus our experience of God's love motivates us to copy our Heavenly Father's example of how to treat people. But more precisely the example of the only begotten Son serves as our model (NRSV): “live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” [περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὄσμὴν εὐωδίας]. Christ's love for us turned into self-sacrifice for our sake. This willingness to put aside personal desires, however legitimate they might be, to help others in times of need becomes the beautiful offering and fragrance that pleases the Heavenly Father. As Charles Shelton characterized it so many years ago in his book *In His Steps*, Christ has set out some big footprints for us to walk in.

Once more, the topic returns to the avoidance of vices in vv. 3-4 (NRSV): “fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints. 4 Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk; but instead, let there be thanksgiving” [πορνεία δὲ καὶ ἀκαθαρσία πᾶσα ἢ πλεονεξία μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω ἐν ὑμῖν, καθὼς πρέπει ἀγίοις, <5:4> καὶ αἰσχρότης καὶ μωρολογία ἢ εὐτραπελία, ἃ οὐκ ἀνήκεν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εὐχαριστία]. This time the focus is on immoral relationships and actions toward others (v. 3) and immoral speech (v. 4). The avoidance of these things is deemed “as is proper among saints” [καθὼς πρέπει ἀγίοις].

PHEME PERKINS (*New Interpreter's Bible*, iPreach) has a particularly helpful summary of the speech issue in verse 4:

The second triad includes two clear examples of censured speech: foolish talk and vulgar talk.<sup>275</sup> The Greek word εὐτραπελία (eutrapelia, “vulgar talk”) has a more positive meaning in common usage than it does in this triad. Usually it refers to “witty” or clever speech.<sup>276</sup> The context in Ephesians indicates that the author has one of the Aristotelian excesses in mind: vulgar or obscene speech. This use of the word may reflect a cultural sense that the proper bearing of a wise person requires seriousness in speech. Persons who are facile with words are less appropriate models than those whose lives exemplify the words they utter: “Let us choose...not men who pour forth their words with the greatest glibness, turning out commonplaces...but men who teach us by their lives, men who tell us what we ought to do and then prove it by their practice.”<sup>277</sup> Or the term may reflect the sectarian emphasis on disciplined speech that one observes in the Essene documents, “and whoever giggles inanelly causing his voice to be heard shall be sentenced.”<sup>278</sup> The speech of the Essene sectary avoids all vices, “From my mouth no vulgarity shall be heard or wicked deceptions....I shall remove from my lips worthless words.”<sup>279</sup>

Verse 5 sets forth the foundational warning letting us know why these patterns of behavior are crucial (NRSV): “Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” [τοῦτο γὰρ ἴστε γινώσκοντες, ὅτι πᾶς πόρνος ἢ ἀκάθαρτος ἢ πλεονέκτης, ὃ ἐστὶν εἰδωλολάτρης, οὐκ ἔχει κληρονομίαν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ]. Quite clearly, the people who live by these vices have absolutely no participation in the Kingdom of God, neither in this life nor in the one to come. This echoes an earlier declaration of Paul in 1 Cor. 6:9-10 (NRSV):

9 Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, 10 thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Thus, “living like Jesus” involves the serious responsibility to behave by certain standards. Namely, those demonstrated by Jesus to be central to the Heavenly Father's own character. God's own Spirit stands as our enabler to provide both the resources and the direction for living up to this high standard.

## GNT

<4:25> Διὸ ἀποθέμενοι τὸ ψεῦδος λαλεῖτε ἀλήθειαν ἕκαστος μετὰ τοῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων μέλη. <4:26> ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἀμαρτάνετε· ὁ ἥλιος μὴ ἐπιδυέτω ἐπὶ [τῷ] παροργισμῷ ὑμῶν, <4:27> μηδὲ δίδοτε τόπον τῷ διαβόλῳ. <4:28> ὁ κλέπτων μηκέτι κλεπτέτω, μᾶλλον δὲ κοπιάτω ἐργαζόμενος ταῖς [ιδίαις] χερσὶν τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἵνα ἔχη μεταδιδόναι τῷ χρεῖαν ἔχοντι. <4:29> πᾶς λόγος σαπρὸς ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν μὴ ἐκπορευέσθω, ἀλλὰ εἴ τις ἀγαθὸς πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν τῆς χρείας, ἵνα δῶ χάριν τοῖς ἀκούουσιν. <4:30> καὶ μὴ λυπεῖτε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἐν ᾧ ἐσφραγίσθητε εἰς ἡμέραν ἀπολυτρώσεως. <4:31> πᾶσα πικρία καὶ θυμὸς καὶ ὀργὴ καὶ κραυγὴ καὶ βλασφημία ἀρτήτω ἀφ' ὑμῶν σὺν πάσῃ κακίᾳ. <4:32> γίνεσθε [δὲ] εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοί, εὐσπλαγχοὶ, χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς, καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν. <5:1> γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητὰ <5:2> καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας. <5:3> πορνεία δὲ καὶ ἀκαθαρσία πᾶσα ἢ πλεονεξία μηδὲ ὄνομαζέσθω ἐν ὑμῖν, καθὼς πρέπει ἀγίοις, <5:4> καὶ αἰσχροῦ καὶ μωρολογίας ἢ εὐτραπείας, ἃ οὐκ ἀνήκεν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εὐχαριστίας. <5:5> τοῦτο γὰρ ἴστε γινώσκοντες, ὅτι πᾶς πόρνος ἢ ἀκάθαρτος ἢ πλεονέκτης, ὃ ἐστὶν εἰδωλολάτρης, οὐκ ἔχει κληρονομίαν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ.

## GNT Diagram

- <sup>25</sup> Διὸ  
ἀποθέμενοι τὸ ψεῦδος  
1 **λαλεῖτε ἀλήθειαν**  
2 **ἕκαστος (λαλεῖ)**  
μετὰ τοῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ,  
ὅτι ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων μέλη.
- 3 <sup>26</sup> **ὀργίζεσθε**  
καὶ  
4 **μὴ ἀμαρτάνετε·**  
5 **ὁ ἥλιος μὴ ἐπιδυέτω**  
ἐπὶ [τῷ] παροργισμῷ ὑμῶν,  
<sup>27</sup> μηδὲ  
6 **δίδοτε τόπον τῷ διαβόλῳ.**
- 7 <sup>28</sup> **ὁ κλέπτων μηκέτι κλεπτέτω,**  
δὲ  
μᾶλλον  
8 **κοπιᾶτω**  
ἐργαζόμενος...τὸ ἀγαθόν,  
ταῖς [ιδίαις] χερσὶν  
ἵνα ἔχη μεταδιδόναι τῷ χρείαν ἔχοντι.
- 9 <sup>29</sup> **πᾶς λόγος σαπρὸς...ὑμῶν μὴ ἐκπορευέσθω,**  
ἀλλὰ  
ἐκ τοῦ στόματος  
εἴ τις ἀγαθὸς (ἐστίν)  
πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν  
τῆς χρείας,  
10 **(πᾶς λόγος ἀγαθὸς...ὑμῶν ἐκπορευέσθω)**  
ἵνα δῶ χάριν τοῖς ἀκούουσιν.
- 11 <sup>30</sup> καὶ  
**μὴ λυπεῖτε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ θεοῦ,**  
ἐν ᾧ ἐσφραγίσθητε  
εἰς ἡμέραν ἀπολυτρώσεως.
- 12 <sup>31</sup> **πᾶσα πικρία**  
καὶ  
θυμὸς  
καὶ  
ὀργή  
καὶ  
κραυγή  
καὶ  
**βλασφημία ἀρθήτω**  
ἀφ' ὑμῶν  
σὺν πάσῃ κακίᾳ.

<sup>2</sup> δὲ  
13 **γίνεσθε...χρηστοί,**  
εἰς ἀλλήλους  
εὐσπλαγχνοί,  
χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς,  
καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν.

<sup>1</sup> οὖν  
14 **γίνεσθε μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ**  
ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητά  
<sup>2</sup> καὶ  
15 **περιπατεῖτε**  
ἐν ἀγάπῃ,  
καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς  
καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν  
ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν  
προσφορὰν  
καὶ  
θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ  
εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας.

<sup>3</sup> δὲ  
16 **πορνεία**  
καὶ  
**ἀκαθαρσία πᾶσα**  
ἢ  
**πλεονεξία μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω**  
ἐν ὑμῖν,  
καθὼς πρέπει ἀγίοις,

<sup>4</sup> καὶ  
**αἰσχροῦτος**  
καὶ  
**μωρολογία**  
ἢ  
17 **εὐτραπλία (μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω)**  
ἃ οὐκ ἀνήκεν,  
ἀλλὰ

μᾶλλον  
18 **εὐχαριστία (ὀνομαζέσθω )**

<sup>5</sup> γὰρ

γινώσκοντες,

ὅτι πᾶς πόρνος

ἢ

ἀκάθαρτος

ἢ

πλεονέκτης,

ὃ ἐστὶν εἰδωλόατρος,

οὐκ ἔχει κληρονομίαν

ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ

τοῦ Χριστοῦ

καὶ

θεοῦ.

