

TEN EXHORTATIONS, PT. 1; EPH. 4:25-28 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

THIS MORNING, ~ WE BEGIN THE NEXT SECTION OF THE SECOND OVERARCHING theme of Ephesians, ~ 4:25 — 5:2.

▶▶ In this next ¶, ~ 4:25—5:2, ~ we find a series of ten exhortations to believers. ~ No one unifying theme

▷▷ So in this ¶, ~ 10 exhortations that help spell out in detail the type of life that brings honor and glory to God, ~ the type of life that should result from the truth of chap. 1-3.

▷▷ In the more immediate context, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ these ten exhortations serve the purpose of describing some of what it means to put off our old self and to put on our new self, ~ which Paul talked about in the previous paragraph, ~ 4:17-24.

→→ So we can also look at these ten exhortations as ten examples of what it means to take off the old life and put on the new life.

▶▶ Today, ~ we'll zero in on verses 25-28, ~ which contain the first three exhortations.

THE FIRST EXHORTATION IS IN VERSE 25a.

NASB ~ "THEREFORE, LAYING ASIDE FALSEHOOD, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE OF YOU with his neighbor.

▶▶ Also be translated as, ~ "Therefore, take off falsehood and speak truth, each one of you, to your neighbor."

▶▶ No more lies, ~ Paul says. ~ Whenever we speak, ~ what comes out must be the truth. ~ Our statements must correspond with the facts.

▶▶ Lying belongs to the person we used to be when we were unsaved, ~ and to "the domain of darkness," ~ from which we've been rescued.

▷▷ Speaking of Satan, ~ Jesus, ~ in Jn. 8:44b, says, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." ¶¶ 1/9

▶▶ My . . . ~ lying has no place in the kingdom into which we have been transferred, ~ i.e., ~ the kingdom of God's beloved Son.

▷▷ Num. 23:19a, ~ LEB ~ "God is not a man, that he should lie."

▷▷ Titus 1:2 tells us that God never lies.

▷▷ Heb. 6:18 tells us, ~ "it is impossible for God to lie."

▶▶ The verb form for "speak" in verse 25a indicates that believers are to make a habit of speaking the truth

▷▷ And this implies that we are to get rid of lying from our lives for good.

▶▶ And we should mention here that Scripture makes it abundantly clear what God's view of lying is.

▷▷ E.g., ~ Prov. 12:22, ~ NIV ~ "The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy ~ [i.e., ~ those who are totally dependable in what they do and say]."

NOTICE IN VERSE 25a THE PHRASE "EACH ONE OF YOU."

▶▶ NASB ~ "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor."

▷▷ This phrase puts the responsibility to tell the truth and not lie squarely on each individual believer.

↪↪ Each individual believer is responsible to speak the truth with his neighbor.

NOW, ~ WHILE BELIEVERS ARE TO SPEAK THE TRUTH AT ALL TIMES TO BELIEVERS and unbelievers alike, ~ the context indicates that "neighbor" here refers strictly to believers.

▶▶ Perhaps we could paraphrase verse 25a this way: ~ "Therefore, get rid of lying and always speak the truth, each one of you, to your brothers and sisters in Christ."

IN VERSE 25b, ~ PAUL TELLS US WHY WE ARE TO ALWAYS SPEAK THE TRUTH TO our fellow believers.

NASB ~ "FOR WE ARE MEMBERS OF ONE ANOTHER."

▶▶ It is because we are all members of the same body, ~ the body of Christ, ~ the church. ~ And we are to be building each other up, ~ not lying to one another. ↯↯ 2/9

▶▶ Think about our human bodies. ~ We can live in safety only when the senses and nerves of our bodies pass true messages to our brains.

▷▷ If they began sending false messages to our brains, ~ we'd be in big trouble.

↳↳ E.g., ~ if our senses and nerves told our brains that something was cool and touchable ~ when in fact it was hot and burning, ~ **we would be in grave danger of being burned or even killed.**

▷▷ A body can function properly and ward off danger only when each part of it passes true messages to the brain.

▷▷ It is the same for our local fellowship, ~ NHCC. ~ In order to function properly and to ward off danger, ~ we must not send false messages to one another.

↳↳ We must speak truth to one another.

IN VERSE 26a, ~ WE FIND THE SECOND EXHORTATION THAT HELPS SPELL OUT IN detail the type of life that should result from the truth of chapters 1-3. ~ ¶¶

AND THAT SERVES AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO PUT OFF OUR OLD SELF and to put on our new self.

▶▶ "Be angry and do not sin."

▶▶ Paul's second exhortation acknowledges that believers may, ~ at times, ~ be legitimately angry, ~ yet we are admonished to not sin.

▷▷ Notice that Paul does not say, ~ "Never be angry." ~ He says, ~ "Be angry and do not sin."

NOW, ~ PAUL IS NOT INSTRUCTING BELIEVERS TO BE ANGRY PEOPLE, ~ I.E., ~ TO BE angry all the time.

▶▶ It could be paraphrased as "When and if you get angry, do not sin." ~ Or as, ~ "Be angry, if you must, and yet, do not sin."

▶▶ Furthermore, ~ the tense of the verb shows that anger should not be an ongoing characteristic of one's life, ~ but rather should be felt and expressed on certain occasions.

▷▷ It is a fleeting anger that Paul is talking about. ¶¶ 3/9

▶▶It thus appears that Paul is affirming the appropriateness of anger at certain times. ~
He regards it as a proper emotion.

▷▷E.g., ~ in [Ps. 119:53](#), ~ the psalmist displays righteous anger. ~ He declares, ~ "Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked, who forsake your law."

WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT IT CANNOT BE SAID THAT THERE IS ANYTHING intrinsically evil about anger.

▶▶In itself, ~ anger is not a sin, ~ because even God can be angry.

▶▶Several times in the OT we see the phrase, ~ "the fierce anger of the Lord."

▷▷E.g., ~ [Jer. 4:8](#), ~ "For this put on sackcloth, lament and wail, for the fierce anger of the Lord has not turned back from us."

▶▶The holy anger of God is a part of His judgment against sin, ~ as illustrated in Jesus' anger when He cleansed the temple.

▷▷[Matt. 21:12-13](#), ~ And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

HOWEVER, ~ WHEN GOD IS ANGRY, ~ HE IS ALWAYS IN CONTROL OF HIS ANGER.

▶▶But for people, ~ even believers, ~ there's always the danger of anger controlling us.

▷▷In us anger is highly volatile and dangerous ~ and provides an environment in which sin can flourish.

▶▶Thus, the 2nd part of Paul's 2nd exhortation in [vs. 26a](#), ~ "and do not sin," ~ is necessary.

▷▷The idea here, ~ taken with the first part, ~ is "When and if you get angry, ~ do not let that anger control you and lead you into sin."

↪↪For instance, ~ if we develop an unforgiving spirit toward someone who has made us angry, ~ then our anger has taken control of us and has led us into sin.

▶▶My brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ anger that controls us and leads us into sin has no place in the kingdom into which we have been transferred, ~ i.e., ~ the kingdom of God's beloved Son. ↵↵ 4/9

IN VERSE 26b, ~ PAUL SETS A TIME LIMIT ON OUR ANGER.

"DO NOT LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON YOUR ANGER."

▶▶ Paul's point is that we are to get over our anger before the day is finished. ~~ No one should make a practice of harboring anger overnight.

▷▷ The time limit prevents the stimulation or strengthening of anger by nursing it or brooding over it.

↪↪ Resentment and bitterness will form if anger is allowed to continue unchecked.

▶▶ The more general principle here is that there is danger in allowing anger to continue beyond a reasonable limit.

▷▷ Our anger must be dealt with promptly. ~~ To put it differently, ~ our anger must be short-lived.

IN VERSE 27, ~ PAUL PROVIDES A REASON WHY IT IS UNWISE TO LET ONE'S anger continue.

"AND GIVE NO OPPORTUNITY TO THE DEVIL."

▶▶ Not dealing with our anger promptly gives Satan an opportunity to tempt us to allow our anger to control us and lead us into sin.

▷▷ Long-term anger offers the devil an opening to defeat us.

▶▶ Now, ~ it's important to point out here that Satan is not omnipresent.

▷▷ So it is unlikely that he is personally assailing every Christian, ~ but is assigning demons to do this work.

↪↪ So we could say that, ~ in the context here, ~ "devil" can go beyond Satan and refer to all of, ~ as Eph. 6:12 puts it, ~ "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places," ~ over which Satan rules.

▶▶ Prolonged anger can give "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" an opportunity to lead us into unkind thoughts, ~ words, ~ and actions that will wreak havoc within the church.

▶▶ Our anger must be managed properly and speedily so "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" do not get an opportunity to exploit it. ↓↓ 5/9

IN VERSE 28a, ~ WE FIND THE THIRD EXHORTATION THAT HELPS SPELL OUT IN detail the type of life that should result from the truth of chapters 1-3, ~ ¶¶

AND THAT SERVES AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO PUT OFF OUR OLD SELF and to put on our new self.

▶▶ "Let the thief no longer steal."

▶▶ The word "let" is easily confused in English with a permissive idea. ~ Quirks ~ Normally translated with "let," ~ but in the Greek text it is actually a command.

▷▷ It could be translated as "The one who steals must steal no longer."

▷▷ Or it could be paraphrased as "I command the one who steals to stop stealing."

THE BELIEVER WHO HAS THIEVERY IN HIS PAST MUST STEAL NO LONGER.

▶▶ In the immediate context of Eph. 4:28, ~ Paul is specifically talking about stealing in relation to someone supporting themselves or supplementing their income by stealing.

▷▷ Paul's mention in verse 28b, ~ of working instead of stealing points to this being the case.

▷▷ The word for "steal" refers to stealing secretly rather than to violent robbery.

▷▷ So Paul is speaking here of those who, ~ before they were saved, ~ secretly stole to support themselves or to make ends meet.

↪↪ If that was the case for any believer, ~ it must stop Paul commands.

▶▶ My brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ the larger principle here is that stealing for any reason by any believer, ~ whether they had a problem with it in the past or not, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ has no place in the kingdom into which we have been transferred, ~ i.e., ~ the kingdom of God's beloved Son.

▶▶ We should mention here that stealing is a violation of the eighth commandment, ~ Ex. 20:15, ~ "You shall not steal."

IN VERSE 28b, ~ PAUL TELLS US WHAT THE THIEF IS TO DO INSTEAD.

CONTEXT, ~ VERSE 28a, ~ "28a LET THE THIEF NO LONGER STEAL, 2b BUT RATHER LET him labor." ¶¶ 6/9

▶▶ Again, ~ note the word "let." ~~ And again we're actually looking at a command.

▷▷ It could be translated as "The one who steals must steal no longer, but instead must labor."

▷▷ Or paraphrased as, "I command the one who steals to stop stealing. ~~ And I command him to labor."

▶▶ The word for "labor" means to engage in hard work.

▶▶ And the form Paul uses suggests that engaging in hard work should now become the regular practice of the one who was accustomed to stealing.

▶▶ So, ~ Paul is saying that the one who steals must stop stealing and make it a regular practice to engage in hard work.

▶▶ And of course the larger principle here is that engaging in hard work should be the regular practice of all believers, ~ not just of those who had a problem with stealing in the past.

PERHAPS TO MAKE SURE THERE ARE NO MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT THE TYPE of labor Paul's talking about in verse 28b, ~ he defines it in verse 28c.

FOR CONTEXT, ~ FROM VERSE 28a.

▶▶ ^{28a} Let the thief no longer steal, ^{28b} but rather let him labor, ^{28c} doing honest work with his own hands."

▷▷ "honest work" refers to work that is honest and beneficial to others.

▷▷ Rather than dishonest work, ~ such as stealing, ~ which hurts the victims, ~ those who stole are to make it a regular practice of engaging in hard work ~ that is both honest and beneficial to others.

▶▶ The phrase ~ "work with his own hands" does not suggest that only manual labor is valid.

▷▷ Rather Paul is using this expression to emphasize honest hard work for gain as opposed to what was gained by theft.

▶▶ In other places Paul uses this idea of working with one's own hands, ~ or, ~ hard work, ~ as the correct conduct for all believers, ~ of which he was a good example. 📖 7/9

▷▷1 Thess. 4:11b, ~ NIV ~ "You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you."

▷▷And in 2 Thess. 3:7-8, ~ Paul says, ~ "For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you."

▶▶So all . . ., ~ not just those who had a problem with stealing in the past, ~ are to make it a regular practice of engaging in hard work that is both honest and beneficial to others.

IN VERSE 28d, ~ PAUL GIVES US THE PURPOSE OF MAKING IT A REGULAR PRACTICE of engaging in hard work that is both honest and beneficial to others.

FROM BEGINNING OF VERSE 28.

▶▶^{28a} Let the thief no longer steal, ^{28b} but rather let him labor, ^{28c} doing honest work with his own hands, ^{28d} so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

▶▶The purpose of the hard work by the former thief goes beyond just providing for his own needs.

▷▷The ultimate purpose of their hard work is to help meet the material needs of fellow believers.

▶▶And this applies to all believers.

▷▷Our ultimate purpose in making it a regular practice to engage in hard work ~ goes far beyond meeting our own needs. ~~ And it is not to become rich or have a lot of things.

↪↪The ultimate purpose in making it a regular practice to engage in hard work, ~ Paul says, ~ is to help meet the material needs of our fellow believers.

▷▷Generosity, ~ particularly to fellow-believers, ~ is to be an essential component of the believer's lifestyle.

↪↪The early church provides the model for us.

→→And Acts 4:34-35, ~ "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need." ↯↯ 8/9

CONCLUSION

OK, ~ LET'S WRAP THIS UP.

▶▶Lying, ~ anger that controls us and leads us into sin, ~ and stealing belong to the old life ~ and to "the domain of darkness," ~ from which we have been rescued.

▷▷Recall, ~ back in 4:22a, ~ Paul said that believers are taught to stop being the person we were ~ and to stop doing the things we did ~ before we came to Jesus for salvation.

↪↪So, ~ along with the old life, ~ lying, ~ anger that controls us and leads us into sin, ~ and stealing must go.

→→They have no place in the kingdom of God's beloved Son, ~ into which we have been transferred.

▶▶Truthfulness, ~ controlled anger that subsides quickly, ~ making it a regular practice of engaging in hard work that is both honest and beneficial to others, ~ and providing for fellow believers in need ~ belong to the new life ~ and to the kingdom of Jesus.

▷▷So, ~ these are the things we must do.

▶▶Eagle's wings, ~ my brothers and sisters in Christ!

LET'S PRAY 9/9