

Sunday March 15th 2009
To the Church of Ephesus – Part Eight

1). Eph 4:14 *that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

a). We had seen last week that the ministry of the apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers through the ministering of the word of truth is within a set timeframe for the purpose of preparing the redeemed for their appearance at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is the responsibility of the pastor/teacher to deliver the whole counsel of God and then for those who receive it after the correct fashion to allow the Holy Spirit to use it to guide them into all truth. As this takes place the redeemed individual will progress from spiritual immaturity to spiritual maturity as they die to the flesh and walk according to the Spirit.

b). What we realize then is that there is an individual responsibility on the part of every Christian to receive the word correctly and then to act upon that which they have received. Just as we have seen so often before as we have looked at James – Jas 1:21 *Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

c). Now as we look at this scripture from James we see that there are 3 distinct actions that need to be taken by each of us. We are to lay aside, we are to receive with meekness and then be doers. And this is a process that we need to follow if our progress towards spiritual maturity is to come to its fullness. These are not just verses that we should commit to memory, rather they are verses we need to have as lifestyle.

d). In fact it is exactly the same as we see in - Ro 12:1 ¶ *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

e). And again, to state the obvious, our transformation can only come about through our choosing not to conform ourselves to this world and then receiving the implanted word with consistency and continuity. That is why we are admonished

so many times in scripture to do so - 2Ti 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

f). 2Pe 1:10 *Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;*

g). Heb 2:1 ¶ *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.*

h). And as we saw last week ‘every part’ of the body, that is each of us individually, needs to do our share of laying aside, receiving with meekness and then doing, because if we do then the whole body that gathers here will grow and be strong through the spiritual bond that we each provide as we build one another up in love, allowing the power of God to work on our behalf - 1Pe 1:5 *who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

i). It is only through allowing this process that we will love each other according to 1 Corinthians 13.

j). If however, for whatever reason, we choose not to do our share of dying to self, then we as a whole will never have the strength that is available to us to stand against the wiles of the devil. There will always be the potential for dislocation and fracture amongst us.

k). To put it very simply – we all need each other and we all need to be on the same page with respect to the goal of our calling.

l). Perhaps it is in order to protect the body as a whole so as to prevent dislocation and fracture that Paul give Titus this instruction - Tit 3:10 *Reject a divisive man[one who causes a schism in the body] after the first and second admonition, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.*

2). And it is with a view to each of us doing our share so as to build up the body in love rather than causing a schism that Chapter 4 of Ephesians continues in this way – Eph 4:17 ¶ *This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

a). These 3 verses detail for us the activities of those in the world to whom we are not to be conformed. Those whose example we are not to follow.

b). Because the power of God is working in us to bring about the metamorphosis, because we all need to do our share of dying to self, because we

are joined and knit together by what every joint supplies and because we are recipients of the greatest, most superlative calling that there could ever be, 'we should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk'.

c). Perhaps we should remind ourselves at this point that our eternal salvation does not of itself produce a change of this nature, but rather now makes that change possible. So here, because of all we have just mentioned, the admonishment is that we are to choose not to live like the unsaved any longer. And this is a choice we all have to make as we have an ever active, ever dangerous sin nature - Ro 7:18 *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*

d). 'The rest of the Gentiles', then [those who are eternally lost] 'walk, in the futility of their mind'

e). Futility = Greek – 'mataios' = from the base of 3155; empty, i.e. (literally) profitless, or (specially), an idol:--vain, vanity.

f). That which governs the minds of these individuals is profitless as it is apart from faith and is by nature self seeking and conceited. Now look at this in - Php 2:20 *For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.*

g). That which Paul records here in Philippians draws attention to a group of Christians who have been taught concerning the coming Kingdom who are choosing to act entirely out of their flesh by seeking their own, thereby walking in the futility of their mind like the rest of the Gentiles, that very thing that Ephesians 4:17 admonishes us not to do. And they do this rather than following the command of scripture that had been given some verses earlier in - Php 2:5 *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 12 ¶ Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. 14 ¶ Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so*

that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

h). It is having this same mindset as Christ that would be profitable for us. Now not only do ‘the rest of the Gentiles’ walk in the futility of their mind but they also have their understanding darkened.

i). Understanding = Greek – ‘dianoia’ = from 1223 and 3563; deep thought, properly, the faculty (mind or its disposition), by implication, its exercise:-- imagination, mind, understanding.

j). Darkened = Greek – ‘skotizo’ = from 4655; to obscure (literally or figuratively):--darken.

k). Now, that the understanding of the unsaved is darkened would be easy for us to see as the Spirit of God has not moved upon them causing the light to shine in their darkness as it has in us - 2Co 4:6 *For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

l). And we know that it is the rulers of the darkness of this age that hold sway over this – but for us for whom the light has shone in our hearts, how would it be possible to have our understanding darkened?

m). Well by comparing scripture with scripture we can find a very tangible explanation for this - 1Jo 2:9 *He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. 10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

n). And within the context of that which we have studied thus far in Ephesians Chapter 4, regarding how we are to relate to each other as in – Eph 4:2 ¶ *with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,*

And - Eph 4:15 *but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

o). What we see recorded in 1 John would be how we need to view this. As all the while we choose to view our brother with contempt rather than compassion, with condemnation rather than forgiveness, and choose to think evil of him with respect to our self, our understanding of what scripture requires of us is darkened and the truth is obscured from our sight. And darkness is always the province of the enemy of our soul.

p). Then as a result of the futility of their mind and their understanding being darkened the ‘rest of the Gentiles’ are ‘alienated from the life of God’. Those who have not had the Holy Spirit breathe life into them are spiritually dead and therefore alienated from the life of God eternally. But for the eternally saved who have received eternal life by grace through faith, their alienation from the life of God would have to be with regards to life in the age to come. Those who are redeemed, who, as a result of their choices, do not take seriously the commands of Christ, will find themselves in that Day without the saving of their life/soul and therefore alienated from the life that God will give for 1000 years - *Php 3:18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.*

q). And this is the outcome for the rest of the Gentiles, ‘because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart’.

r). Ignorance = from the Greek – ‘agnoeo’ = from 1 (as a negative particle) and 3539; not to know (through lack of information or intelligence); by implication, to ignore (through disinclination):--(be) ignorant(-ly), not know, not understand, unknown.

s). Now ignorance on the part of the rest of the Gentiles might easily be through a lack of information or intelligence, because they just don’t know; but when we are addressing ignorance in the redeemed, especially those who have an understanding of the 7th Day and all that is entailed in that, we could not attribute this to lack of information, but rather to ignoring through disinclination. In other words, speaking of ourselves, we would have to choose to deliberately be ignorant of the truth of scripture. And on the face of it such a thing seems to be quite ridiculous, but, nevertheless, this is exactly what we find recorded in scripture with regards to those who would step away from the faith - *2Pe 3:4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." 5 For this **they willfully forget**: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, 6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.*

t). Then our Ephesians verse continues - ‘because of the blindness of their heart’ – again for the rest of the Gentiles this would be easily understood. The deceptiveness of the things of this world may easily cause their hearts to be blind to the need of a Savior. But for us who should be in pursuit of the Kingdom the blindness of our hearts is not with regards to the need of a Savior, but with regards to not believing that which God has said - *2Co 4:3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has*

blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

u). What we might especially note here is that if we choose to live in unbelief, which would mean we were already in the process of perishing with regards to the age to come, it provides opportunity for the god of this age to bring about a spiritual blindness that would prevent us from seeing ‘the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ’.

3). Now as we continue with the rest of the Gentiles we see this in - v19 *who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

a). Being past feeling = Greek – ‘apalgeo’ = from 575 and algeo (to smart); to grieve out, i.e. become apathetic:--be past feeling. In other words they are no longer troubled by a conscience.

b). They have come to a place then where they no longer make a distinction between right and wrong having no consciousness of sin and as a result ‘have given themselves over to lewdness’. No one made them do this, no one forced them to do this – they gave themselves willingly to it.

c). Lewdness = Greek – ‘aselgeia’ = from a compound of 1 (as a negative particle) and a presumed selges (of uncertain derivation, but apparently meaning continent); licentiousness (sometimes including other vices):--filthy, lasciviousness, wantonness.

d). As a result their ‘work’ is given over to ‘all uncleanness’ – remember that at the Great White Throne the eternally lost are judged according to their works.

e). All uncleanness = Greek – ‘akatharsia’ = from 169; impurity (the quality), physically or morally:--uncleanness.

f). And this work is also with ‘greediness’.

g). Greediness = Greek – ‘pleonexia’ = holding (desiring) more, i.e. eager for gain (avaricious, hence a defrauder):--covetous.

h). We would only need to look around us to see that this is an exact description of the world in which we live.

i). The shocking thing is though that this picture is also rampant in the Church. Yet having said that it is only as scripture says - 1Ti 4:1 ¶ *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,*

j). And please note that those who are the perpetrators of the action have ‘departed from the faith’ - Tit 1:15 *To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and*

conscience are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

k). And the warnings remain clear for us - Eph 5:5 *For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*

l). 2Pe 2:13 *and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, 14 having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. 15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;*

m). And again, the admonishment to us is that we should not walk in this way like the rest of the Gentiles. Can we choose to walk like this? Of course we can. And our choice is not demonstrated by what we say, but how we live and especially how we relate to each other.

4). The Holy Spirit being fully cognizant of our ability to make the wrong choices then reminds us of a pertinent fact - Eph 4:20 *But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

a). ‘But you have not so learned Christ’ – the way the rest of the Gentiles walk is not the way we have learned to walk from Christ. However the first word of v22 makes this conditional ‘if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him’.

b). And this is the subject of a warning to Christians that we find in the Book of Hebrews - Heb 4:6 *Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, [the Rest] and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, 7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."*

c). The reference here is to the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt who had the same good news preached to them as we have had, but because they did not trust God their hearts were hardened against Him and as a result the whole generation apart from Joshua and Caleb perished in the wilderness – eternally saved, but falling short of receiving their inheritance.

d). If we hear His voice 'today' with regards to this same good news and do not harden our hearts against it, but instead allow Him to teach us, then as a result of that teaching we will choose to put off our old man, we will choose to be renewed in the spirit of our mind and we will choose to put on the new man who resembles God in true righteousness and holiness and in doing so we will realize our inheritance.

e). The picture here of course is one of taking off one garment and putting on another. We are to take off the old man and put on the new man. And which one of these we choose to wear will determine how we live. But in order to take off the old and put on the new we will have to have heard Him first, because –
Ro 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

f). And walking in the Spirit rather than in the flesh is always an act of faith – faithful obedience, an act of righteousness.

g). Weymouth in his translation of the NT presents these 5 verses in Ephesians 4 as follows - Eph 4:20 *But these are not the lessons which you have learned from Christ; 21 if at least you have heard His voice and in Him have been taught--and this is true Christian teaching-- 22 to put away, in regard to your former mode of life, your original evil nature which is doomed to perish as befits its misleading impulses, 23 and to get yourselves renewed in the temper of your minds and clothe yourselves 24 with that new and better self which has been created to resemble God in the righteousness and holiness which come from the truth.*

5). What then follows to the conclusion of Chapter 4 are practical examples of what it means to put off the old man and instead put on the new –

Eph 4:25 *Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. 26 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil.*

a). As we put off the old man we will put away lying and putting on the new man we will each one 'speak truth with his neighbor - Col 3:9 *Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*

b). And here in Ephesians 4:25 Paul is quoting from the OT, from the Book of Zechariah - Zec 8:15 *So again in these days I am determined to do good To Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear. 16 These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace; 17 Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate,' Says the LORD."*

c). And this quotation contextually has to do with the blessing of Israel with regards to the land and their inheritance and how the nation should conduct itself in respect of that.

d). And it is with a view to our land and our inheritance that Paul uses this scripture in Ephesians 4. And the phrase ‘for we are members of one another’ would clearly show that this is with regards to ourselves here in the local body. With the consequence of our failing to heed the scripture given in – Re 21:8 *"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

e). And again with regards to putting on the new man we are told to ‘be angry and do not sin’ which is another quotation from the OT, this time from Psalm 4, a Psalm of David - Ps 4:3 *But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly; The LORD will hear when I call to Him. 4 Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah 5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And put your trust in the LORD.*

f). That we might experience the emotion of anger is a real possibility, but it is what we choose to do with that emotion that can cause it to become sin. Here in Psalm 4 we see the means by which anger does not overflow into sin. And it is a threefold interconnected process – ‘meditate within your heart on your bed and be still’ – in other words get before the Lord and stay there and do not take action based upon your anger. And whilst before the Lord meditate within your heart. So the obvious question – meditate on what? The subject of our anger? Absolutely not! - Ps 77:12 *I will also meditate on all Your work, And talk of Your deeds.*

g). Ps 119:15 *I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways.*

h). Ps 119:148 *My eyes are awake through the night watches, That I may meditate on Your word.*

i). Ps 145:5 *I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, And on Your wondrous works.*

j). ‘Offer the sacrifices of righteousness’ – the putting to death of the flesh-choose not to be offended, choose not to walk in bitterness, choose not to think or speak evil of the person who has caused our anger, choose to forgive, choose to love.

k). And then the third of the three – ‘put your trust in the Lord’. In the first place we must trust the way the Lord has given us to deal with anger. If we don’t trust Him we won’t do it – in other words we don’t really believe that God’s way works. And secondly, if the person who has caused our anger does have a case to answer for, again we put our trust in the Lord - Ro 12:19 *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.*

l). Then in addition to this we are told, ‘do not let the sun go down on your wrath’ – and we can understand this in two ways. Firstly the obvious notion of dealing with our anger quickly, not allowing it time to fester and begin to grow a root of bitterness - Heb 12:15 *looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;*

m). Because we are members of one another, any one of us having a root of bitterness has the potential to bring defilement on the whole body because of the words and actions that come out of that bitterness.

n). And secondly, within a broader context, don’t let this day, Man’s day come to an end for you without ever dealing with our wrath - Ga 5:19 *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

o). And finally both within the context of our anger and our having put off the old man we should not ‘give place to the devil’ – we are not to let the enemy of our soul have access to us through our sin nature because we choose not to deal with it.

p). And if the Lord is willing we will continue with this next time.