

Sunday March 22nd 2009
To the Church of Ephesus – Part Nine

1). 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. 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). We had seen last week, within the context of all God has done for us and all that God has made possible for us, that we are admonished not to walk like ‘the rest of the Gentiles’ – that because of the reality of what we know we will make the choice to walk in the spirit and not in the flesh even though this may be the last thing we want to do.

b). We had seen how ‘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.’ And we had seen through scriptural examples what it would look like for redeemed individuals, even those who are grounded in the word of the Kingdom, to follow their pattern of behavior.

c). And then how, because of our innate ability to make wrong choices, the Holy Spirit reminds us of a particularly pertinent fact, a fact that we find in v20 of our opening scripture- ‘But you have not so learned Christ’ – walking like ‘the rest of the Gentiles’ is not what we have learned from Christ.

d). Then in v21 of our scripture the Holy Spirit draws attention to an uncomfortable truth – despite being eternally redeemed and despite the truth that is in Christ, we can only access this truth, and be taught by Him, ‘IF indeed you have heard Him...’

e). And what we would realize from this is that it is not just a case of listening to the scriptures or reading the scriptures, or being physically present in service every week but having ears to hear the spiritual truth which is taught and then allowing this truth to change our way of living.

f). What do we find over and over in the letters to the churches in Revelation? - Re 2:7 *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes....."*

g). We may not have put the two together, but being an overcomer is absolutely dependent on our ability to hear what the Spirit says. Just as we have seen before in - Ro 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

h). And in order for faith, believing what we have heard, to be brought to its goal it must translate from comprehension into action. The first generation of Israel is of course our example here of what not to do - Heb 4:2 *For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*

i). Then if we go back into Hebrews Chapter 3 we find this warning for ourselves based on Israel's example - Heb 3:12 *Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, 15 while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." 16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

j). Now please notice from our scripture here that our hearts can become hardened against His voice, even though the sound goes in our ear, through the deceitfulness of sin.

k). Sin, simply, is refusing to believe God – now this is not refusing to believe that there is a God, or refusing to believe in the coming Kingdom, or refusing to believe in the events of the Judgment Seat, but rather, refusing to align our hearts and minds with that which scripture requires of us in order that we may receive our inheritance, particularly with respect to the way we are to relate to one another within the body. In other words being disobedient to the commands of Christ. Unbelief and disobedience are two sides of the same coin. Remember what God said to Israel - Ex 19:4 *'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. 5 'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'*

l). And sin is deceptive because it will always want to convince us through providing a plausible justification that it's more important to be right in our own eyes, or that we are the exception, or that God didn't really mean what He said, rather than humbling ourselves. It is possible for us to be deceived into believing

that we can gain the Kingdom without the pain that's involved in crucifying the flesh.

m). In the Book of Revelation there is only One found worthy to redeem the inheritance - Re 5:6 ¶ *And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.*

n). It is the 'Lamb as though it had been slain' with the scars in His hands and His feet and His side – the One whose wounds prove His sacrifice and therefore His worthiness to redeem the inheritance.

o). In that Day it will be those of us with the scars not visible to the naked eye from the crucifying of our flesh, scars that will be identified as works of gold, silver and precious stones, who will find ourselves counted worthy to be a joint heir of that same inheritance - Ro 8:17 ¶ *and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

p). 1Pe 2:21 *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:*

2). We had seen that if we have heard Him and been taught by Him then we would choose to put off the old man who grows corrupt through the deceitful lusts and instead put on the new man who resembles God in true righteousness and holiness. And what then follows are examples of what this would look like in practical terms
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). And if we think about what we saw last week as we studied these verses we will conclude that lying, anger and wrath are not only all works of the flesh that are never excusable, but they are all inherently selfish coming from a heart of selfish ambition and conceit rather than lowliness of mind and humility.

3). And it is with a view to the practicalities of putting off the old man and putting on the new that Chapter 4 of Ephesians continues like this - Eph 4:28 *Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. 29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be*

kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

a). Our next example is the one who is a thief – stealing would be an act of the flesh and part of the makeup of the old man. And inevitably the focus of theft is self – ‘I want what you have without working for it therefore I take it’. Putting on the new man would require the one who was formally a thief making a choice to ‘steal no longer’, but rather to labor within his own ability, so that from what he earns through his work ‘he may have something to give him who has need’ – the focus here of course is entirely unselfish – self sufficiency apart from covetousness with a view to blessing the less fortunate. And these two ways of living are set side by side to demonstrate the contrast between the two – the old man and the new

b). V29 then makes another contrast this time referencing that which comes out of our mouth – ‘Let no corrupt word...’

c). Corrupt = Greek – ‘sapos’ = from 4595; rotten, i.e. worthless (literally or morally):--bad, corrupt.

d). We might remember this from - Pr 18:21 ¶ *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.*

e). And this in - Jas 3:8 *But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.*

f). And then within the context of the Judgment Seat the Lord says this in - Mt 12:37 *"For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."*

g). This is a somewhat sobering thought – so how is this possible? Well the answer can be found in what Jesus says to the Pharisees some 3 verses earlier – Mt 12:34 *"Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*

h). This is an issue of the heart isn't it? Whatever façade we present to the world is one thing, but the true condition of our heart is shown by what comes out of our mouth. And in that Day the thoughts and intents of our heart will be laid bare. And we cannot separate these from the works of gold, silver and precious stones or the scars of worthiness which we carry. In our Proverbs 18 scripture death and life are in relation to the Kingdom Age, and either of these is in the power of our own tongue for ourselves. If we love to speak the ‘corrupt’ word, we shall in that day eat its fruit and experience death, but if we love to speak ‘what is good’ then we shall eat its fruit in that Day instead and receive life.

i). And according to James we cannot condemn or revile our brother one moment and bless God the next – this just does not work. No matter how

passionately we bless God or praise God, if we have a knife stabbed into our brother our blessing and praising of God is a lie.

j). Again here is the deceitfulness of sin. We can be deceived into thinking that because we have the outward signs of a holy life through prayer, praise, 'good works' that God will overlook the wickedness of our heart – this is not a horse trade. It's all or nothing. Paul describes to Timothy the Christian who operates like this - 2Ti 3:5 *having a form of godliness but denying its power*

k). 1Jo 4:20 *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*

l). And to remind ourselves once again, loving our brother is choosing to relate to one another according to the description of love in 1 Corinthians 13. And our choice to love one another in this way must be made in the midst of the fact that we are imperfect people struggling with our own sin nature – and loving one another in this way will constantly require us to crucify our flesh. We cannot love apart from that.

m). Our scripture in Ephesians then continues - 30 *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption*

n). The word grieve here means to make sorrowful. We must not let our actions or that which comes out of our mouth cause the Holy Spirit to be sorrowful.

o). And why would He be sorrowful? Well not just because we would be in sin, but most specifically because He has sealed us for the day of redemption. The Holy Spirit if you will has placed a mark on us that shows that we have been separated from the world in order to receive an inheritance in the world to come. The Holy Spirit also resides in each one of us in order to guide us into all truth and lead us to the land that God has promised – can you imagine then His sorrow when we deliberately choose to act in a way that can ultimately result in us losing the very thing for which we have been sealed? The admonition to us, as we see is 'do not grieve the Holy Spirit' – church, this is not a suggestion.

p). Then with grieving the Holy Spirit and speaking no corrupt word still in view we are given examples of works of the flesh, characteristics of our old man, that if allowed to go unchecked would grieve the Holy Spirit and would result in our speaking corrupt words - 31 *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice*

q). How much of these things are to be put away from us?

r). How much then are we allowed to retain?

s). Bitterness = Greek – 'pikros' = perhaps from 4078 (through the idea of piercing); sharp (pungent), i.e. acrid (literally or figuratively):--bitter.

t). Wrath = Greek – ‘thumos’ = from 2380; passion (as if breathing hard):--fierceness, indignation, wrath. Compare 5590. [This has its origin in a word meaning to slay]

u). Anger = Greek – ‘orge’ = from 3713; properly, desire (as a reaching forth or excitement of the mind), i.e. (by analogy), violent passion (ire, or (justifiable) abhorrence); by implication punishment:--anger, indignation, vengeance, wrath.

v). Clamor = Greek – ‘krauge’ – from ‘krazo’ = a primary verb; properly, to "croak" (as a raven) or scream, i.e. (genitive case) to call aloud (shriek, exclaim, intreat):--cry (out).

w). Evil speaking = Greek – ‘blasphemia’ – from ‘blasphemos’ = from a derivative of 984 and 5345; scurrilous, i.e. calumnious (against men), or (specially) impious (against God):--blasphemer(-mous), railing.

x). Malice = Greek – ‘kakia’ = from 2556; badness, i.e. (subjectively) depravity, or (actively) malignity, or (passively) trouble:--evil, malice(-iousness), naughtiness, wickedness.

y). All that we see in these words are relational, they are all describing heart attitudes that are a part of our old man and all involve allowing ourselves to be worked up into a physical and emotional state of rage coming dangerously close to hatred. In this condition we would sit in judgment upon our brother and condemn him, probably with a view to punishing him also. But please note what the scripture says is the consequence for allowing ourselves to walk down this path – 1Jo 3:15 *Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*

z). This is then a serious business.

4). Then in contrast to the actions of the old man we are told how we should conduct ourselves having put on the new man instead - *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.*

a). In contrast then we are to be kind to one another in a demonstrable way, both in our actions and in our words – even if our brother or sister doesn’t, in our opinion, deserve kindness.

b). We are also to be tenderhearted towards one another – we are to have compassion for each other and have sympathy for each other. If we will only realize that we are all in the same process and all at different stages in that process and that God is at work in each of us, then we might have compassion rather than being aggravated because someone doesn’t fit our picture of what they ought to be.

c). And we are commanded to forgive one another, just as God in Christ forgave us.

d). Mt 6:14 *"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 "But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

e). Forgiveness here is paramount - Mt 18:21 ¶ *Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. 23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 "And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 "But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 "The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 27 "Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. 28 "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' 29 "So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 30 "And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 31 "So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. 32 "Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 'Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' 34 "And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."*

f). So exactly what does it mean for us to forgive each other in exactly the same way that God in Christ forgave us?

g). Well let's just think about this for a moment - Ro 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

h). Our sins were forgiven at the point of our eternal salvation through Christ having taken the penalty for our sins upon Himself. His death and shed blood satisfied the wrath of God directed towards us because of the sin we committed towards Him. And then beyond this point of eternal salvation the continued forgiveness of our sins as redeemed people is still contingent upon Christ's sacrifice - Col 1:12 ¶ *giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*

i). It is Christ's own blood, the blood of God Himself, that is responsible for our present cleansing - 1Jo 1:7 *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

j). In other words then forgiveness requires sacrifice, it requires the death of the flesh. If our brother or sister has sinned against us there will inevitably be a wound, a point of pain that will come as a result of the sin. And it may be that we will carry the wound, and the pain that comes from that sin for the rest of our lives. Let's please be clear that the old adage, 'forgive and forget' is not scriptural. It would be more correct for us to realize that we have to forgive even though we can't forget. And we may have the burden of having to carry the emotional and perhaps even the physical scars all the way to the Judgment Seat. Have you ever thought that when we stand before Christ in all His glory, that underneath the glory are the same nail pierced hands and feet that He received at the crucifixion? The very scars that He carries because of the sin we committed against Him? Yet in that Day He will not remind us of one thing for which we have been forgiven. Not that He has forgotten it, but He has forgiven us.

k). And in our present situation as we go to the throne of grace to find help in time of need He doesn't begin by reviewing the catalog of our previous sins. He deals with us as if this is the first time - La 3:21 ¶ *This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. 22 Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*

l). His motivation is not revenge, but restoration; not condemnation, but compassion. And here is our model. Just as God in Christ forgave us, in the same way we are to forgive one another. This is not a point of negotiation, it is a command and therefore something that can be done and something that we must do - Col 3:12 ¶ *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

m). If our brother sins against us 70 times 7 we are commanded to forgive on every occasion, and if we have made the choice to forgive then neither our actions nor our words will draw from the pain we have received in the past, but rather we shall choose to die to our flesh and choose to love our brother according to the scriptures. Anything apart from this comes entirely from our old man, who we are admonished to put off.

n). 2Jo 1:5 ¶ *And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. 6 This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is*

the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

o). 1Jo 5:3 *For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*

p). I fully appreciate that on many occasions this is the most difficult thing we have to do, but difficulty does not absolve us from responsibility. And as always our motivation and determination come from the Kingdom which is to come - Re 22:14 *Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.*

q). If we don't get it, or we don't see it – then we won't do it and our inheritance will be lost. Do not be deceived.

5). And here we find ourselves at the beginning of Ephesians Chapter 5 – Eph 5:1 ¶ *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*