

The New Way of Life

Hank had attended church since he was a boy and now he was over 60 years old. Everyone knew who Hank was, there wasn't a Sunday that went by that Hank wasn't in church. The truth is however, no one really knew Hank at all. Hank had difficulty loving his wife. His children lived with his harsh words spoken in anger. He hid his shady business deals from everyone. Hank was not concerned about the poor and had little tolerance for those outside the church. Hank also tended to judge those in the church rather severely, *"Those kids shouldn't be running around in the church. Look at what she is wearing to church. All these new people are just ruining our church."*

One day an elder in the church asked Hank, "Are you happy, Hank?"

Without shedding a smile, Hank replied, "Yes, Why?"

The elder then responded, "Well then Hank, you need to tell your face?"

You see Hank's exterior mirrored his interior. The problem was Hank did not appear to be changing. There was no evidence of him being transformed. But the most remarkable part of it all was, that if you brought this issue to the congregations' attention, they would've simply said, "So?"

No one seemed to care that Hank remained unchanged. There were no emergency board meetings to consider this strange occurrence of a person who was not changing. No one really expected Hank to change, and therefore they were not surprised when that change did not happen.

There were however other expectations of Hank. Everyone expected that each Sunday morning Hank would be at church. He sat there, right where he always sat. They trusted that Hank would take communion like he always did. The congregation knew that Hank would read the scriptures, and give his offering faithfully. Whenever called upon Hank would help with moving the tables and chairs. Hank was a faithful member of his congregation.

But people did not expect that day by day, month by month, decade by decade, Hank would be more transformed into the likeness of Jesus. People did not expect that he would become progressively more truthful, more loving, more joyful, and excited about Christ in His life. So they were not shocked when it did not happen.

Remember as we have studied Ephesians chapter 4 we have discovered from God's Word that :

1. **Every believer** is **Called** to a new life in Christ, 4:1-6
2. **This change** makes us progressively more **Christ**-like. Ephesians 4:1-6
3. **Christ's power** through His Spirit makes change **Possible**. Ephesians 4:7-10
4. **The church** is God's primary **Setting** for change in our lives. Ephesians 4:11-16

5. Live-out this change by God's **three-fold principles of transformation**:
Ephesians 4:17-24

- a. **"Put -Off"** the old self. Day by day, moment by moment I decide to live in the reality that my old self died with Christ and everything associated with that old way of life has to go.
- b. **"Be Renewed"** in the spirit of your mind. I must allow the Holy Spirit through the word of God to change the way I think. Change happens from the inside-out.
- c. **"Put -On"** the new self. Living the brand new life is like putting on a brand new clothes. It's conforming my outside to what God is doing on the inside.

Now Paul moves on in verses 25-32 and begins to show us what the new life looks like in some specific areas. Listen to the scripture here:

Ephesians 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.**
- 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.**

Paul gets very specific here. He talks about speaking the truth instead of lying, about controlling anger, about working and sharing instead of stealing, about building others up with our words instead of tearing them down. This is where the rubber meets the road. The first characteristic of this transformed life is that we are going to have a transformed tongue.

I. A Transformed Tongue (Eph. 4:25)

A. Put Off: Do Away with Lying.

2000 years may have passed since Paul first penned these words but people haven't changed. Lying was then and is now a common problem.

Lying is embedded in the fabric of our culture. The book *The Day Americans Told the Truth* says that 91 percent of those surveyed lie routinely about matters they consider trivial, and 36 percent lie about important matters; 86 percent lie regularly to parents, 75 percent to friends, 73 percent to siblings, and 69 percent to spouses (*Daily Bread*, August 28, 1992). Lying means cheating on an exam, cutting corners on taxes, making foolish promises, breaking a confidence, making deceitful excuses, blaming others, exaggerating, etc...

What's worse is that many people who claim to be Christians lie habitually. Instead of being transformed and living like the people God called them to be, they live like the lost.

In Colossians 3:9 Paul says, "**Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.**" Lying is part of the fabric of the old man. It doesn't fit-in with the garment of the new man.

Where does lying and untruthfulness come from? Jesus said in John 8:44, "**You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.**" Satan is the author and the source of lies. The first question in the Bible is the devil casting doubts on God's Word (Gen.3:1).

Since the devil is the source and inspiration for lies, when we lie we give him glory. Imagine how thrilled he is that a child of his enemy does his bidding! When we lie we advance his causes and promote his kingdom.

B. Put On: Speak Truth.

It is not enough that we stop lying, we must also tell the truth. That is putting on Christ. You see how practical that is? If you reject lying, and, instead, you deliberately, intentionally, purposefully speak the truth, even though it may hurt, even though it is sometimes hard truth, then you are "putting on Christ" when you speak the truth. That is walking in the Spirit, in practice. There is nothing mystical about it at all. It is exceedingly practical. You reject lies, you do not speak falsehood, but you speak the truth for Christ's sake, because he is the truth. When you do, you are putting on Christ.

Understand that to "**speak truth**" is not to tell everything we know. We must keep confidences. Only a fool vents all his feelings. But it does mean that we live a truthful life, our way of speaking is transformed so that when we speak, we speak the truth.

I saw this modeled especially in one of my former church members in Kansas. Wes was a plumber by trade and a good one. New construction work was hard to find for a while so Wes took a job with the city as a building inspector. But Wes always spoke the truth. He was honest as the day is long. And so he would not take a bribe or not turn the other way when he saw problems or when the work was not up to code. Wes did not last long in that job because honesty was not the way the world does business. But it is the way Christ does business.

C. Renew the Mind: We are Members of One Another.

Paul tells us that we should not lie but tell the truth because "**we are members of one another.**"

That means that, in the body of Christ, as members of Christ's life, we do not live to ourselves. Therefore, if we lie, we not only hurt ourselves, but we hurt others as well. Obviously, here, he means other Christians, because we are members one of another in the body of Christ. But this does not mean that we must tell the truth to Christians but it is okay to lie to non-Christians. He is not saying here, *"Stop lying to Christians, but with someone who is not a Christian, go right ahead, that's all right."* No, he is saying, "If you lie to anyone you hurt the whole body of Christ, not only yourself, but all who are Christians." The cause of Christ is injured by even one lie. Christianity is made contemptible in the eyes of the one to whom you lied. He not only sees you, but he sees the whole cause for which you stand, and he writes it off as worthless.

A man once said, *"You know, when a man tells me that he's a Christian, I get nervous and cautious. I've been burned so many times by Christians, I've decided I can never trust a Christian."* What brought him to that place? Christians who lied! When we lie we injure the cause of Christ. This is the point he is making.

Hansen's disease is the modern medical term for the Biblical disease leprosy. Some forms of leprosy lead to a condition where the nerves are severely damaged and destroyed. It usually begins in the extremities such as the nose, fingers and toes. When a leper trips on a curb and sprains his ankle he is unable to tell there is a problem. They feel no pain. When they continue to walk on the injured member the muscles tear, the tendons break and tissue is destroyed. When we lie to each other we send a false signal. When we lie we continue to step off the curb and walk on the injured member. Lies will numb and eventually sear the conscience. When you lie, you grieve yourself, others and God.

A person who is wearing the garment of Christ is transparent and open and honest and does not lie about anything, especially with his lips. He doesn't speak deceit because the Holy Spirit has changed the way he thinks about what is important. His primary concern is the health of the body of Christ and the honor of the Name of Jesus.

II. A Transformed Temper (vv.26-27, 31, 32b).

Secondly we have a controlled temper. "Wait a minute. Are you telling me I can have a temper and it still be under control?" Yes. Look at what he says here in verse 26:

"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath."

We think anger in itself is sin. No. It is what you do with anger. Paul, quoting Ps.4:4 says we are to **"be angry and do not sin."** Being angry is not necessarily wrong. We can be angry without sin.

A. Put Off: Put Away Misplaced Anger.

The word for anger here does not refer to unchecked rage, but "a deep-seated, determined and settled conviction" (MacArthur). As believers we are to have a righteous indignation, an anger against evil, injustice, immorality and godlessness. In other words, this anger is not really just you getting mad. It is the Lord Jesus in you. He was not a mild person all the time. He drove the moneychangers out of the Temple. This Man Who came to this earth, the God-Man Who was so virtuous, stood in a perfect balance between the extremes. He got angry, but He knew what to be angry at. He knew the target of His anger. He knew exactly how to express that anger. He never sinned at all.

On the other hand, a Christian is not to have misplaced anger. This is described in v.31 as "**bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking... with all malice.**" Our anger is not to be selfish and self-centered.

B. Renew the Mind: Resolve Angry Feelings.

Paul gives us great advice here. If we do become angry we must be careful not to "**let the sun go down on your [our] wrath.**" In other words, don't let it go unresolved. Listen to Ps.37:8, "**Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret; it only causes harm.**"

Anger that is unresolved will become what the Bible describes in v.31 as "**bitterness.**" Bitterness breeds malice. "**Malice**" is a feeling of ill will that leads to the desire to seek revenge. "**Bitterness**" broods and seethes. It eats at us like cancer.

Eventually "**bitterness**" will give way to "**wrath.**" That's the explosive type of anger. The only problem is, you never know when it will go off. Have you ever been angry with someone else but took it out on your spouse or children? I sure have! It's not fair.

In the spring of 1894, the Baltimore Orioles came to Boston to play a routine baseball game. But what happened that day was anything but routine. The Orioles' John McGraw got into a fight with the Boston third baseman. Within minutes all the players from both teams had joined in the brawl. The warfare quickly spread to the grandstands. Among the fans the conflict went from bad to worse. Someone set fire to the stands and the entire ballpark burned to the ground. Not only that, but the fire spread to 107 other Boston buildings as well (Daily Bread, August 13, 1992).

Unchecked anger smolders until it burns with a flame so hot that it destroys everything around it.

One pastor said it like this, "**Bitterness is claming up. Wrath is blowing up. Both are sinful. Both are wrong. God doesn't want us to clam up or blow up but rather grow up!**"

If we refuse to resolve our anger we "**give place to the devil.**" We give him an opportunity, a foothold in our lives. Want to serve the devil? Continue to lie. Continue to justify your unresolved anger after all you deserve to be mad! Your heart will be a fertile soil for his evil garden.

C. Put On: Forgive One Another.

Look at the end of v.32. It tells us to be "**forgiving one another even as God in Christ forgave you.**" You want to hear something interesting? God was kind and tenderhearted to you. And God was forgiving to you. And you want to know something? You didn't...what?...deserve it. You don't yell at somebody because they deserve it, you yell at somebody because you're sinful. You don't lie to somebody because they deserve it--you lie because you're sinful. You don't express anger at somebody because they deserve it, you do it because you're sinful.

The character of God says I don't care what you've done to me, I'll love you and I'll be kind to you and I'll be tender to you and I'll forgive you. In whatever way we may have been offended, maligned or wounded, it pales in comparison to what Jesus suffered for us. Not only does He give us grace in forgiveness, but He also gives the grace to forgive.

Nothing makes the Holy Spirit happier. And nothing frustrates the devil more. Notice verse 27, "**nor give place to the devil.**" To give place to the devil means to give him an opportunity. Oh, listen, when you allow the Holy Spirit to control your temper, you are going to frustrate the devil. Do you want to frustrate him? I do. As a matter of fact, I love to irritate him. If you want to irritate him, immediately forgive everyone who wrongs you. Put on the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, and you are going to frustrate the devil every time.

If we could be a community in the midst of this world, a community of people who never lie but always speak the truth, a community of people who never get angry so that it's a sinful anger, but always act in love, if we could be those who have no bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, but always forgive do you think the world might take a note of our message? I think they would. That's the transformed life.

Think about Hank, the church member who did not appear to be changing. Are you more like Hank, or are you becoming more like Jesus?