

### 13. Learning to Put Away the Actions of the Past

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk as new people in Christ. We saw that at the moment of salvation, we were given a new nature with new desires. We also saw that as we learn to think Biblically, we grow in our understanding of the things that are pleasing to God. In addition, we were reminded that we were given the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation so that we have the power to carry out the things that are pleasing to God. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to put away the actions of the past and learn to carry out those actions that are pleasing to the Lord.

The first action we are encouraged to put away is lying. Ephesians 4:25 says, “Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another.” Here, we see that the Lord encourages us to put away lying and speak the truth to our neighbor instead. Then, this verse tells us why we should make this change. It reminds us that we are members of one another. The word “members” speaks of the various parts of the body such as the arm, the leg or the tongue. Here, we are reminded that as Christians we are all parts of the body of Christ. Romans 12:4-5 says, “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” Just as our tongue does not lie to our arm, as Christians we are to speak the truth to one another.

Ephesians 4:26-27 says, “‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.” This verse is quoted from Psalm 4:4-5 where we read, “Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.” Here, we see that it is possible to be angry and still not commit sin. That will happen if we hate the sin but love the sinner. The Father hated our sins so much that He said that the penalty for sin is death. At the same time, the Father loved each of us individually so much that He sent His Son to pay that penalty so that He could freely forgive all who would repent and turn to Christ for forgiveness. Christ hated our sins so much and at the same time loved each of us so much that He paid that penalty by shedding His own blood in our place and for our sins. We can be angry without sinning as long as we love the sinner and hate the sin.

At the same time that we love the sinner and hate the sin, we are not to let that anger turn to wrath. Another form of the word translated “wrath” is used in Ephesians 6:4 where we read, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” A father provokes his children to wrath when he exasperates them and stirs up their anger so that it becomes continuing anger against the parent. Such wrath, when held inside a person, can turn to bitterness. We are to make certain that our anger against sin does not turn to anger against the sinner or we will give the devil an opportunity to develop bitterness in the life of that person.

Ephesians 4:28 says, “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.” Before people come

to Christ, many will steal to get what they want. As Christians, our lives are to be an example for Christ. As a result, we are told to labor or work until we are exhausted. Acts 20:35 tells us why this should be our attitude. That verse says, “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”” By working hard, we see that we have extra to share with those who are needy. Here, we see that the love of Christ gives us a concern for the needs of others and not just our own needs.

Ephesians 4:29 says, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” The word that is translated “corrupt” means *something that is rotten, worthless or smells bad*. Matthew 12:33 says, “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by *its* fruit.” In our verse in Ephesians, this word is translated “corrupt”. In most of the other places where it is used, it talks about bad or rotten fruit. If the roots of a tree are rotten, the fruit will be rotten. If corrupt or evil words come out of our mouth, those words help us to realize what is in our heart.

Instead of destructive words, we see that we are to speak words that will build up others. The word that is translated “good” means *that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects*. In Galatians 6:10, we read, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Here, we see that we are to look for opportunities to do good to all including those who are not Christians. In Ephesians 2:10, we read, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” In this verse, we see that we have been created for good works. As a result, we want to speak words that will build up others and help them to grow in their spiritual lives. Jesus gave us the example of how to speak when Luke 4:22 says, “So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, ‘Is this not Joseph's son?’” We also want to speak words that bring grace to the hearers.

Ephesians 4:30-31 tell us that we grieve the Holy Spirit with corrupt words and then gives us a list of attitudes that cause evil words and tell us to put away those attitudes. Those verses say, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.” Here, we are reminded that evil speaking grieves the Holy Spirit. The word that is translated “grieve” in these verses means *to make sorrowful or cause to be sad*. The word was used of Christ when He went to pray in the garden just before He was betrayed by Judas. Matthew 26:37 says, “And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed.” We need to remember that when we speak evil words, it causes great sorrow to the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that was placed in us as a seal until the day that the Lord takes us to heaven and so we want to avoid causing Him sorrow.

We are given a list of six attitudes and actions that cause sorrow to the Holy Spirit that are related to our speaking. The word translated “bitterness” here is the same word that is used in Hebrew 12:15 where we read, “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.” We see that a root of bitterness in our hearts will defile many people. “Wrath” speaks of anger that boils up, often with both words and actions. Luke 4:28-29 says, “So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff.” Here, wrath caused the people of Nazareth to try and kill Christ.

The word that is translated “anger” here is often translated “wrath” but is a different word than the word that was translated “wrath” earlier in the verse. This word is used in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 where we read, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here, the word speaks of the coming eternal judgment. It speaks of a deep inward hostility. The word translated “clamor” speaks of a crying out or shouting. Acts 23:9 says, “Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, ‘We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.’” In this verse, the Pharisees and Sadducees were shouting at each other. “Evil speaking” is another word for “slander”. “Malice” speaks of any evil that desires to hurt others even if it means breaking the law to cause that hurt to others.

In contrast to such words and actions, Ephesians 4:32 says, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” Here, we see the actions that show Christian love. The word that is translated “kind” means *what is virtuous, useful and good*. Christ used this word in Luke 6:35 where we read, “‘But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.’” Here, we see that God is kind even to those who are unthankful and evil. The word that is translated “tenderhearted” in this verse means *to have great compassion toward others*.

We also see that we are to be forgiving of one another. This word translated “forgiving” means *to grant forgiveness or pardon to another person*. This means that we do not hold the sins of another person against that person any longer. We see that we are to forgive others because God forgave us due to the fact that Christ paid the penalty for our sins. Colossians 2:13-14 says, “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” God forgave us all of our trespasses. He blotted out everything that was written against us at the moment we placed our faith in Christ. We want to help our children understand that is why we and they should forgive others in the same way and for the same reason that God forgave us. As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to put away the actions of the past and ask Christ to help them learn to follow His example, our children will be greatly blessed by the way the Lord works in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to put away the actions of the past.