

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: November 29, 2009

Living Consistent With Our New Identity: Speaking Truth in the Body

by Dan Trygg

"But truthing in love, we might grow *all things* into Him who is the head (i.e., the source and one who bring us to completion), Christ..."
Ephesians 4:15

"Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one *of you*, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity." Ephesians 4:25-27

Following down from Eph. 4:17-24, let's see how Paul seeks to implement our new identity experientially.

"**Therefore**" -- This is a logical connector indicating that what Paul is about to write flows out of what he has already written. **Whenever you see a "therefore", ask yourself, "What is it *there* for?"** The Greek word in this verse is *not* the most common word translated as "therefore". Literally it means "on account of which". It even *more closely* ties this section back to vss. 17-24 as the **application** of the principles taught there, ...specifically -- "walk no longer as the Gentiles walk..." and "put off the old person, ...be renewed in... your mind, and put on the new person...". The apostle had described a manner of living life that the unbelievers had practiced (vss. 17-19), ...an approach to life that is *inconsistent with* our new birth and walking in the Spirit (vss. 20-24). **Now, Paul is getting down to specific application of how to walk out "truth in Jesus". Now the nitty gets gritty.**

"**laying aside falsehood**" -- A literal translation would be, "(for yourselves)-putting-away-from-you-(at a point in time) the phony...". The form indicates that *we are intensely involved in this action*, and it affects or limits us, in some way. The "point in time" quality of the form means that we are to deal with it "*at the moment, in the moment, and for the moment*". The action prescribed is a one-time event. Paul does *not* say we should always and forever be doing this, ...that would be too much for us. Nor, does he say that we can make a choice in the moment that will settle this issue once and for all. No, what he tells us is that **when the temptation to be "false" comes up, put it aside at that moment, in that moment, and for that moment.** That is as much as we can do. This verb is *a form of the same word* used in vs. 22 for "put off the old person". The logical connection is inescapable. *This is a specific application of how we do that.*

The word translated as "falsehood" is the Greek word *pseudō*. **Paul is not talking so much about telling lies as he is concerned about our tendency to be phony**, ...to wear a mask..., ...to project an image or "false front" ..., in order to impress others, or to keep ourselves hidden, safe, in-vulnerable. **The apostle encourages us to "put aside the mask" with each other.** *Now you can understand why this is an action that intensely involves and affects us.* **We have created our "mask" to hide our weakness, our hurts, our defects, our fears. To take off that mask is to expose ourselves**, to "come out into the light of day as we really are". The verbal form is a participle, an "-ing" word that is *not* the main verb, rather it is an action we do *as* or *while* we do the main verb ("speak truth"). The two actions are inter-related. In other words, **as we put aside the phony, we are able to speak what is real to one another.**

"**speak truth each one with his neighbor**" -- There is an important shift that takes place in the language here that is not apparent in our English translations. The context of the action moves from *everybody* ("y'all speak truth"), where the entire group is in focus, to shift over to a context that can only be described as *very personal and private* ("each one with his neighbor"). In other words, **the appropriate context for speaking truth, in the manner that Paul is suggesting, is primarily at the personal-relationship level.** *Why?* First of all, *it is "safer"*. You can more effectively monitor the reaction of the person with whom you share your thoughts, and can adjust what you share accordingly. If you expose yourself entirely to a large group, you run the risk of being mistreated by certain unhealthy individuals that may be in the group. Secondly, *truth is more effective on a personal level.* The interaction can be very specific. Application will likely be more readily apparent than the "shotgun approach" that a group teaching would require.

The personal nature of the communication is reinforced by the use of the word "neighbor". In English, this word is a *noun* that most people understand as "the person who lives next door to you". Actually, the word "neighbor" is a translation of an *adverbial phrase* in the New Testament Greek. Literally, a "**neighbor**" is "**the near (one)**". This is, indeed, commonly used for someone living nearby (spatial proximity), but we too narrowly limit the term to just that idea. Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-37) was given in response to the question, "Who is my neighbor?". There, the conclusion was that **the "neighbor" to be loved was anyone in proximity who had a need.** Furthermore, the despised Samaritan was the only one who "proved to be a neighbor" to the hurt traveler, because he "felt compassion and came to him" and served him. **The idea of availability seems to be the point at issue in defining who proves to be a neighbor to you.** Someone who will value you enough to help you, even at great

personal cost, is someone available and willing to be "near" you in your time of need. That is someone demonstrating himself to be a true neighbor. The Samaritan showed that **it is possible to "act the part of the near one" without any relationship history there at all.** Love can motivate us to "draw near to" someone, even when we do not have the natural factors of day-in and day-out interaction and familiarity. **The basis for our "nearness? -- "because we are members of one another"**. More than simply living next door to someone, we all are like limbs in the same body (Rom. 12:4,5; I Cor. 12:12-27). (Note this is an actual, organic, spiritual unity, ...like a limb on a tree or a part of your body..., *not* a listing on a membership roll.) The words "of one another" translate a reflexive pronoun in Greek. That means the relationship described is reciprocal. You are a limb of me, and I am a limb of you. Thus, we have a *common basis* of interaction, and a *common interest* in helping each other. *Your* health, vitality, and maturity will affect *me*, ...and *my* health and well-being will affect *you* (I Cor. 12:26). **We are interdependent.** The focus turns to the corporate reality once again.

(In spite of the high-minded ideals that I have just described, **we would be foolish to ignore the obvious.** There *are* "near ones" in life. **We can, and often do, naturally develop relationships with some people** that provide a safe environment for "letting down the mask" and "speaking truth". A "near one" in this context would be someone we have developed "relational proximity" with, i.e., we have gotten "close to" them. Sometimes this creates an environment where "we can talk about anything", i.e., there is a natural "ease" in communicating. **At other times, we choose to put ourselves into "relational proximity" with someone that we otherwise might not "hang out with"** (e.g., a mentor or counselor) for the purpose of accountability and growth. Hopefully, such "near ones" will truly help us grow. **Some of our "near one" relationships may actually keep us stuck in old or immature behavior.** We may find ourselves easily talking about and rehearsing old, fleshly attitudes and behaviors. This is not helping us. We need friends who will help us grow and mature in Christ, not keep reinforcing old ways of thinking and living. **Others may direct us in ways that are contradictory to the things of God.** Their counsel is from the world, not God. **Sometimes we will need to distance ourselves from "near ones" who are at cross purposes to our growth in Christ. This can be difficult, but it is necessary.**)

What does it mean to "speak truth"? (Note that it does not say, "speak *the* truth". Paul is not talking about rehearsing Bible verses or engaging in theological discussion here. Same with Eph. 4:15 -- Literally, "truthing in love", not "speaking the truth".) The word for "truth" is actually a negated form of the word for something hidden, unnoticed, ...something that is actually there, but has not been perceived, or has been ignored. **To speak truth, then, is to bring the hidden thing out into the open, ...to point out and explain what has been overlooked, ...to take note of what was unnoticed, to bring to awareness what the person did not perceive, or ignored.** It is important to see that what is "truth", or what is "reality", *already exists*, ...whether we are aware of it or not. **Speaking truth is simply pointing out what actually is there**, ...not making something up, or somehow creating something that did not previously exist. **With regard to ourselves, it is being honest about what is going on inside of us, ...or about what is real about our lives.**

"Be angry, and *yet* do not sin" -- I think it is absolutely fascinating that this verse is the further application of what Paul has been building in the previous verse. ***Emotional honesty, ...bringing out into the open feelings of anger that have been unseen, unnoticed, or "covered over" by our mask of phoniness..., is the first, most important and urgent application that the seasoned, Spirit-led apostle advocated concerning "speaking truth".*** Paul wants us to bring our hidden feelings out into the open. He wants those who have not noticed them to see them clearly. There are two parts to this equation: On the one hand, we who feel hurt or angry need to be able to express our pain in order to be understood and comforted. On the other hand, we who have been insensitive and hurtful need to see what the consequences of our words and actions are. We are the ones who are not seeing the truth clearly. We are oblivious to, or in denial of, the pain we cause to others. **Both parties are to benefit from an honest exchange. The relationship is to be deepened as the result.** The goal is to come to resolution. ***Healthy anger is not a license to strike out***, but it does provide motivation to speak up where we have been offended. God wants *true harmony*, not *pretense*.

You will notice that the word "yet" is in italics in the NASB. It is not there in Greek. Literally, Paul commands us, "Y'all (for yourselves) be angry and do not miss-the-target". In my background, anger was a negative emotion that was disapproved of. I had always understood this verse as putting a cap on my anger, as reinforcing the messages that I learned growing up. I am suggesting, however, that Paul is advocating exactly the opposite. **Anger can be our ally in promoting healthy relationships and in molding godly character.** What I believe this verse to be saying is, "Be honest, ...be angry and do not miss out on what the anger is to produce." **We sin, we miss-the-mark, by covering up our anger.** Paul is encouraging us to no longer hide it behind a mask, but to make use of our anger as the *tool* God intended it to be. **Anger is there to tell you something is wrong that needs to be addressed.** As we speak honestly, and respectfully, about our feelings, hopefully we will help one another work through the issues behind our anger, and we will grow as a result. **In order to have harmony, we must communicate in love, respect one another, and listen.** If we cover up our anger, the offense goes unaddressed, bitterness grows, and the enemy can fracture our relationships. **We must work through our concerns**, so that the enemy cannot find a way to cause division (Eph. 4:27).