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# A New Walk

## Ephesians 4

### Introduction

A celebrity makes a mistake. She is taken to court for it. If it was you or I the case would be heard, a sentence passed, punishment paid and possibly a mention in the local newspaper. But she is a celebrity. The national newspapers go wild. Her private life is splashed across the front page. On social media she is called all sorts of names. Insults and threats are hurled at her. Her every moment is spent in the presence of hatred.

She is found dead. Twitter takes a deep breath. “Have we been responsible for this?” Maybe we need a change of attitude. Maybe we should stop spitting hatred and instead be nice to each other. Let’s start a hashtag: #BeKind

Well, Twitter didn’t get there first. Read verse 32 from our chapter:

*[32] Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

Two thousand years ago Paul could see that the church needed a change of attitude, a new walk.

### Overview

We’ve been looking at some of the classic chapters from the Bible. In the process we’ve found that Ephesians 2, 3 and 4 were all picked. There must be something about Ephesians.

It’s a letter written to a church but also to all churches. Paul uses picture language to refer to how God sees the church, and we thought of these pictures last time we looked at this chapter. The church is:

- A family, with God the father and each of us fellow-heirs with Christ
- A body, made up of many parts which all work together with Christ as the head
- A bride, prepared and made beautiful by Jesus the bridegroom, for the marriage feast
- A temple made of living stones, fitted together to bring glory to God

Ephesians is also a book of mysteries. Paul mentions three throughout the book:

- Ch 1 v 9 - Jesus will reconcile all things to himself

*[9] making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ  
[10] as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

- Ch 3 v 6 - Jew and Gentile will be given equal access to God

*[6] This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*

- Ch 5 v 32 - Jesus will be united with his church in the marriage feast of the Lamb

*[31] "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." [32] This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*

Notice how all of these mysteries involve bringing things together in Christ. That's what Paul wants and what God has planned. Unity is a consistent theme through the book. So is renewal and we see that in the 3 chapters we have studied:

- Chapter 2 - new life as we see hope for the walking dead
- Chapter 3 - a new family as Jews and gentiles are made co-heirs in the church
- Chapter 4 - a new walk as Paul teaches us how to live the Christian life

And so we come to our chapter.

## **A New Walk**

You can tell a lot by someone's walk. I've had a physiotherapist tell me about past injuries by watching the way I walk. I also had a colleague tell me she knew I was coming round the corner by my footsteps.

Paul doesn't want our walks to reflect our past though, he wants them to reflect our new condition: our salvation through Jesus Christ. He sets this out in the first verse:

*[1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called*

You see, our salvation is all of God, our security is in Christ, our position is assured, but our walk depends on our own efforts. God has given us the ability to fight temptation and live a life victorious over sin. But he doesn't make it just happen. It requires us to fight a battle daily, as we face temptations to fulfil our own desires.

In verse two we learn what this walk is to look like:

*[2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,*

There is an attitude that should be evident in us, in our approach to life, in how we treat others. Is your walk like this? Is this how you treat your family? Your colleagues? Your brothers and sisters in Christ? If it's not, Paul's going to tell us how to change it further down the chapter.

Then we learn the reason we should be like this:

*[3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Our outward lives are witnesses to the world of what God has done within. If we argue with each other we deny that the Spirit is within each of us and gives us a unity. This unity is important to Paul.

## **Unity in the Spirit**

From verse 4 to 6 Paul tells us there is:

- One body
- One Spirit
- One hope
- One Lord
- One faith
- One baptism
- One God

So why are there so many different denominations? Why did Christians so often disagree about what is true and what is right? They're not walking as they should be.

How do we get on with our brothers and sisters? Are we displaying the unity that the Spirit gives us by our walk?

### **Diversity of Gifts**

Although we are one in the Spirit, we are not all the same. God has made us different, like different parts of the body, each with its own use and each one important. In v11 Paul lists just some of the gifts God gives, in this case the ones he uses to build up the body:

- Apostles
- Prophets
- Evangelists
- Shepherds
- Teachers

There are many more gifts and each is important in the church. Where would we be without the giver? The merciful carer? The organiser? Paul wants us to build up our gifts and grow as a church, that we might be stable and strong (as a certain ex prime minister might say):

*[12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.*

Growing in strength and growing together as a church are important, but there is one vital aspect of the church: Christ must be the head. If we look to Christ for knowledge, for direction, for discernment, and let him rule, then we will truly grow to be an effective witness for him.

*[15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

## Put off the Old Self

So we know we need to grow in strength and in spirit, with Christ as our head, working together as a witness to the world of the gospel and the unity in the Spirit. But what steps can we take towards this goal. Paul says we have two selves: an old self, which belongs to our pre-saved person, and includes the habits, desires and motives that signify a sinful life without Christ; and a new self, ruled by the Spirit and pleasing to God.

*[22] to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [23] and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Imagine an old, tattered coat that we must cast off to put on a beautiful robe, clean and shining. Paul has plenty of examples of what this means:

- Put away falsehood for truth, v25. Are you a liar? We don't like being called that. And yet we can be guilty of putting on a false front, like one of these Instagram filters that removes all your flaws. We come to church and act all holy, knowing that actually there are problems in our lives that need dealt with. Maybe it would help if someone prayed for us. But how can they pray if we aren't honest? To be transparent is to be humble and admit our flaws. But isn't that what Paul asked for right at the start of the chapter? To walk in humility?
- Put away rage for self-control, v26-27. Paul says to be angry and not sin. Anger itself isn't necessarily wrong. We can have a righteous anger when we see injustice, for instance. But to lose control is sinful, to let anger turn into rage. It lets Satan in to cause all sorts of havoc. Paul's advice is to deal with your anger before the day is over. Otherwise it can gnaw away at you and become bitterness. Hand it over to God. He is the best one to deal with injustice.
- Put away theft for work, v28. But we are not thieves, are we? Well, someone at my work is, or my milk is evaporating much faster than expected. But we don't just steal things. We can steal people. We can steal power. We can steal time, when we do our own thing instead of a task we have for God.
- Put away gossip for encouragement, v29 - "*let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths*". Or our fingers! How easy it is to criticise, to put down, to be part of the angry mob. Can we offer an uplifting word instead? A word of encouragement? Of love?
- Put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, slander and malice, for kindness, tenderness, forgiveness, v31-32.

This isn't an easy change to make. We will often find ourselves sliding into our old self. It's comfortable, familiar, and easy. And yet with the power God gives us at salvation to overcome temptation, we are able to throw off the old self, put on the new self and walk the walk that shines out the name of Jesus to all around.

If we do this we bring honour to God. We bring unity to the church and it grows in maturity. We are like a body where all the parts are healthy and working together.

Be like the Lord Jesus. Be kind. And more than kind.