

# THE WHOLE BIBLE: Ephesians - Colossians

## EPHESIANS

- first of Paul's "Prison Letters" | imprisonment in Rome
- general letter, not addressing specific problem | "twin" to Colossians

### Practical Christian living

#### Ephesians 4:17-32

<sup>17</sup> Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. <sup>19</sup> They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. <sup>20</sup> But that is not the way you learned Christ! – <sup>21</sup> assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, <sup>22</sup> to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

<sup>25</sup> Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. <sup>26</sup> Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and give no opportunity to the devil. <sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. <sup>29</sup> Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

#### “Old self / new self”

- change we need is not incremental or just in parts
- not just behavioral change, but inner transformation
- language of clothing – decisive change; no half-measures
- change in nature and fundamental commitments and desires

### Christian morality

- radically different – fulsome righteousness, inner motivations
- do not lie
  - but speak the truth | to build up others
- do not be angry
  - but righteous anger | don't give Satan a foothold
- do not steal
  - but do honest work | so share with those in need
- do not speak corrupting words
  - but use your words to build up | with wisdom and insight
- love one another
  - show compassion and kindness
  - forgive one another | because we have been forgiven in Christ

## PHILIPPIANS

- in light of his imprisonment, Paul wants to encourage believers

#### Philippians 1:12-21

<sup>12</sup> I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

<sup>15</sup> Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. <sup>16</sup> The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. <sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup> as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

### **Paul's imprisonment**

- constantly chained to Praetorian Guard | shameful and dehumanizing
- Paul's fruitful ministry of preaching gospel impeded
- and yet, Paul is not discouraged, but full of joy!

### **In Christ, everything bad will turn out for good**

- Praetorian Guard is hearing the gospel!
- Christians are emboldened to preach the gospel
- even Paul's personal enemies are advancing the gospel

### **v. 21 – “to live is Christ, to die is gain”**

- what is the well-spring of your life?
- if it is Christ, then even suffering and death is gain

## Introduction to Ephesians

- first of Paul's "Prison Letters" | imprisonment in Rome
  - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon
- general letter, and not addressing specific problem
  - twin letter to Colossians | content and format parallels

## Ephesians 4:17-32 | Practical Christian living

<sup>17</sup> Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. <sup>19</sup> They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. <sup>20</sup> But that is not the way you learned Christ! – <sup>21</sup> assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, <sup>22</sup> to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. <sup>25</sup> Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. <sup>26</sup> Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and give no opportunity to the devil. <sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. <sup>29</sup> Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

## Old self / New self

### (1) Change we need is not incremental or just parts of our life

- we need radical change | completely transformation
  - not just habits and thoughts, but entire self

### (2) Not just behavior change, but inner transformation

- notice behavior (v. 25ff) follows inner life (thoughts, desires, heart)

### (3) "Put off the old self; put on the new self"

- language of clothing – decisive change; no half-measures
- shift in loyalty / identity | new direction of walking

#### Old self:

- alienated from God – rebellion against God, cut off from him
- futility of thinking – meaninglessness, emptiness, hollowness
- hardness of heart – unfeeling and hard, not soft heart
- corrupt through deceitful desires – led astray by evil desires

#### New self:

- created in likeness of God – like son imitating his father
- renewed in spirit of mind – continual renewing (new vitality), not just thoughts, but direction and theme of thoughts
- learn Christ – not just study, but deeply relational, by knowing him
- life of true righteousness and holiness

#### New set of behaviors

- Christian morality is radically different:
  - not just cessation of evil, but active participation in good
    - fulsome righteousness, comprehensive goodness
  - not just behavioral change, but motivational reason
    - not just outside behavior, but motives/heart matter

#### Do not lie

- but speak the truth – not just correct facts, but edifying truth
- lies destroy relationship and trust | truth builds up community

#### Do not be angry at one another

- there is righteous anger at evil, injustice | not optional
- "do not let sun go down" – don't fester, but move quickly to reconcile
- "don't give opportunity to devil" – Satan wants destroy church

### **Do not steal**

- but do honest work
- so share with those in need | money not for self, but to love others
- radical vision of money and possessions

### **Do not speak corrupting words**

- not just cussing | but words that tear down, full self-absorption
- but use your words to build people up | give grace to people
- “as fits occasion” – wield words with wisdom, deep understanding

### **Finally – love one another**

- v. 32 – “be kind to one another, tenderhearted (full of compassion)”
- “forgive one another” – why? because we have been forgiven

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### **Introduction to Philippians**

- in light of his imprisonment, Paul wants to encourage believers

<sup>12</sup> I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

<sup>15</sup> Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. <sup>16</sup> The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.

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Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup> as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

### **The problem of Paul’s imprisonment**

- constantly chained to Praetorian Guard (v. 13)
  - elite soldiers, personal bodyguard to Roman emperor
- dehumanizing, demeaning and deeply shameful in culture
- under constant threat of execution

### **Paul’s ministry impeded**

- Paul was greatest evangelist who ever lived | planted churches
- now, leader of Christian movement was jailed – prime of career

### **Amazing that Paul is not discouraged, but full of joy**

- not afraid of death | live or die, doesn’t matter
- sense of well-being isn’t contingent on circumstances
- where does get this power to face suffering, setbacks, failures?

### **In Christ, everything bad will turn out for good**

#### **(1) Praetorian guard is hearing the gospel!**

- Paul never had this opportunity otherwise
- Paul has this captive audience
  - most persuasive evangelist in world
  - hardened, pagan guards were getting converted one-by-one
  - “All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household” (4:22)
- who would have designed it this way?
- remember story of Joseph – betrayal, slavery, false imprisonment
- all for good – Joseph might rescue his family and whole world
- deepens our trust in the inscrutable wisdom of God

#### **(2) Christians emboldened to preach the gospel**

- Paul’s courage inspired others to be courageous
- paradoxical: Christian suffering produces great energy and boldness
- “blood of martyrs is seed of church”

#### **(3) Even Paul’s personal enemies are advancing the gospel**

- even those who intend personal harm to Paul are advancing the gospel

### **Not in spite of adversity, but because of adversity**

- notice the ground note of joy throughout the passage
- v. 18-19 – “I rejoice; yes, and I will rejoice!”

**v. 21 – “to live is Christ” | Paul’s definition of life**

- what living for? what makes life worth living?
- is it circumstances: family, career, pleasure, approval?
- Christ is the bottom line | foundation, well-spring of hope
- if Christ is what he’s living for, no circumstances can ever take away
- then even suffering and death is gain | “to die is gain”

**v. 19 – “I will rejoice for I know that through your prayers  
and help of the Spirit, this will turn out for my deliverance”**

- “deliverance” is not release from prison
- because otherwise, why say, “whether by life or by death”?
  
- “deliverance” is Greek (σωτηρία) | “salvation”
- Paul is not talking about temporal salvation, but eternal salvation
- God is working for his salvation through adversity and suffering