

Well, I know that the last couple of teachings have been very intense and powerful in that God has used them to open door after door after door. I also know that it has many of you afraid for you are feeling things you have never wanted to feel and coming into touch with memories that you have kept so hidden and buried that you had hoped they had disappeared. But as you know, nothing we have stuffed and hidden behind our doors ever disappears; it just festers and festers.

I want you to understand and believe that God is being so faithful to you and although His spotlight of truth can be very uncomfortable, painful, and scary, it is the best thing that could ever happen. As I have said before, each of you has been chosen to become the stopping place for years and years (perhaps centuries upon centuries) of generational sin and family dysfunction. God does not want it to go any further; He wants it all not only stopped but He wants to redeem everything that has been stolen from you. He wants to restore you to life that should have been yours; and He wants you to live in freedom free of fear and insecurity.

So let it happen. Remember, God will walk you through the process. Just don't fight it; don't try and control it; don't try and shove it back in the room and once again lock the door. In addition, please don't be ashamed by the fact that for a while your behavior might be a little off. It's ok; we understand. Many of us have been through it and you have been patient with us so we will be patient with you.

Keep having dialogue with God about what you remember and about what the pain has produced in your life. Continue to talk to Him and even be mad at Him (I know that some of you have just recently experienced that for the first time); remember it is ok, He knows what you're thinking anyway. Ask Him to continue to

pull out everything that is not of Him and to show you even the smallest of rooms that is shut off from His presence. In addition, ask God to show you where He was and what He was doing during the entire time that you were enduring the things that created your wounds. I assure you, He was not absent and I know you will be surprised at how much of a presence He had in your life and how much He worked to protect you, to preserve you, and ensure that you only endured what was absolutely necessary. I know right now you probably can't see it, but I am confident that He will show you if you ask.

Tonight we are going to continue in ***Ephesians 4*** and cover verses **28-30**. This passage began with the command to no longer live from the futility (the uselessness) of our own minds but instead to put off the old self and be renewed in the spirit of our minds and put on the new self which has been created in the likeness of God, righteous, holy and true. As a result, we are to no longer live in falsehood; rather, we are to speak the truth. In addition, we are to be angry and yet not sin and not let the sun go down on our wrath. And what follows will be further instruction as to how our lives are to be lived when we cloth ourselves with the *new self*.

However, before we dive into the passage, there are a couple of things I want to make sure is understood clearly by all of us. **First**, faith is always active and never passive! In other words, if you are not active in continually putting on the *new self*, you will by default be pulled back to the ways of your *old self*—like a magnet—and you will live according to your own wisdom indulging the desires of your mind and the flesh (which as you know always results in death).

Therefore, you must continually put on the *new self*. This a moment by moment

decision to actively cling to Jesus for all things and let Him be your’ “I Am.” It is a moment by moment decision to let His Word be authoritative over your life such that you are willing to “bet your life” on all that He says about Himself and all that He says about you.

Now, I have been saying this for a while and I know that since you have heard it over and over it probably passes right by your brain and may not really be a tangible concept to you as much as it is a spiritualized concept—in other words, you can understand the words and the idea but you are not quite sure how to apply it in daily living. I mean for real, how do we “bet our lives” on all that God says about us and how do we practically “put on” the *new self*? Have you been struggling with trying to make this real in your life? Let me give you an example of how I have done it and maybe it will help put some meat on the bones.

A couple of years ago, God came knocking on one very specific door that I had kept shut and had protected so carefully. It was the door that I had closed because I did not believe that God was truly my “protector” and “defender.” Oh sure, I could say those words but in reality they were spiritualized and not something upon which I was willing to bet my life. You see ever since I was a young kid I had this strong sense of justice burning in my soul and I had a very strong reaction to anything that I considered to be unjust; and, for some strange reason, I felt that I had to defend and protect myself from things that were unjust and fight against those who were perpetuating the injustice.

It probably started because I was small and people felt they could pick upon me just because of my stature, and so I would fight and not let it happen (and this happened quite often). At the same time, I never felt I could rely on others to

protect me or shelter me from such things. My older brother never protected me in this way; in fact, he was the one who often picked fights for me or was oppressing me just because he was bigger and he could. And during the time when things were very difficult in my family, I also never experienced protection from what were often unjust outbursts of anger and wrath. So needless to say, I became my own protector and my own defender; however, even though I could fight and argue with the best of them, the unresolved anger from the ways I had been hurt and violated had been pushed down deep in my soul and was festering.

Well, this was not something God was going to allow. So He started to knock and knock and as soon as I cracked the door open a flood of emotion poured from my life (which I know a lot of you are now experiencing). I sat at my kitchen table by myself and I must have balled for hours. I then knew I had to talk to those who had a significant part in not protecting me and I did it by writing down what God had shown me and I sent it to them. This resulted in some very meaningful discussions and a lot of repentance and forgiveness. But that was only the beginning of my healing. I still had to learn how to “bet my life” on the truth that God said He was, had always been, and would always be my “protector” and “defender.”

So in very short order God allowed some circumstances into my life that were going to test me in this regard (not test me in terms of pass/fail but test me in terms of giving me an opportunity to practice what I said I believed in order to establish my faith). And to my amazement, I was viciously attacked and dealt with in a very unjust manner and it pressed right on that wound that was waiting to be healed. I could feel all those old reactions rising up within me and I wanted to take

control and respond in some manner of personal defense. Now, I was not tempted to fight in the manner I did when I was a kid, but I was tempted to strike back and once again shut down and defend myself from being hurt by hardening myself to those people who were hurting me.

You see, in my mind God being my “protector” and “defender” meant that He either would no longer allow this kind of ridiculous attack or that He would smack around those who hurt me (and I wanted that to happen now and not at “judgment” day). But all of that came from the futility of my own mind and not from the wisdom of His mind. Besides, I am pretty sure that I would not want God to deal with my acts of injustice in the way I wanted Him to deal with the unjust acts of others. So I am actually glad that His definition of being my “protector” and “defender” is wholly different than mine; and I am also more than glad that He is a merciful and compassionate God and does not deal with me as I deserve.

With that said, in this area of my life, I had to come to understand that God being my “protector” and “defender” was not always about the immediate circumstances and what I thought was happening to me in the moment. I had to accept that God operates on a much larger scale than just the “moment” as His purposes for me are eternal. I had to become convinced that being conformed into the image of Christ was my Father’s priority; and it was good regardless of how uncomfortable I may need to be in order to effect those purposes.

I had to be willing to “bet my life” on the fact that if I refused to take matters into my own hands, if I turned to Him and trusted myself to Him, that He would make me strong and secure regardless of what others were doing to me or saying about me. I had to believe that like Jesus I could stand in the midst of hostility and

aggression and know that I am so loved and adored that it does not matter what man has to say; it only matters what my Dad has to say. He really used *Isaiah 51* to bolster my faith in this regard.

I had to learn that even though my feelings were intense, out of control, and I felt angry, mad, and desired to hurt in return, and then shut myself down so I would not have to be hurt any more, that they were just feelings and were not to be something upon which I dwelt or to which I would give authority. They were not my reality. I had to believe that if I turned to Jesus and stood secure in His love that all those crazy out of control emotions would eventually be pacified and silenced. I had to let the words He spoke over my life (that I was His precious possession) be authoritative to me and have a higher voice in my life than my thoughts and feelings.

And guess what, when I decided that this is how Jesus wanted me to live and how He wanted me to enjoy Him, I was actually able to stand and not become all messed up just because I was being unjustly attacked. Now don't get me wrong, I did not enjoy it and I did not pretend that it was ok with me; but what I did not do was internalize their sin and their brokenness and let it eat me alive with anger and wrath. I also did not shut down just because the way God wanted to work in this situation was different than the way I wanted Him to work.

Instead, I had my conversation with Jesus about what they did (actually many conversations), prayed for God's mercy to be poured out on their lives (I asked Him to do whatever it would take to bring these people into an abiding relationship with Jesus), and then I fixed my gaze, so to speak, and moved forward with what He wanted me to do in this body. And lo and behold I found that

instead of being shut down, I was actually in a position to continue to love and care for you in the moment. In this regard, I had become Jesus living miracle as I was operating out of my new self and no longer controlled by my *old self*.

So the spirit of my mind had to be renewed according to Jesus' definition of protection and defense. I had to shed my thoughts of what I demanded from God and how I demanded Him to perform. I had to align my will and my choices with the truth of His character and nature and trust myself to Him regardless of what was happening to me and regardless of what I felt. I had to turn to Him and then turn to Him and then turn to Him. Believe me it did not all happen at one time, I had to continue to put on the new self and refuse to walk in the ways that I used to walk, which I knew were according to the futility of my own mind. I had to be so convinced of His love for me that I would give myself no other option but to leave it all in His hands.

This is just one example of what it means to "bet your life" on the character and nature of God and to trust yourself to Him in a very real and tangible way. This is just an example of the way "belief" can become aligned with the power that God gives us to choose to follow Him with the result being **active faith** expressing itself in love, which according to **Galatians 5:6** is all that really matters anyway.

The second point I want to make is that the new self lives by faith (**Galatians 2:20**) and will therefore, by definition, be active in the lives of other. But, I have to warn you, if you go out and try and draw your boxes and "do" the things that we are going to discuss through your religious *old self*, it will ultimately be corrupted. Oh sure, for a while you may be able to muster up the energy, the focus, and the passion to do it "right," but eventually that will not be enough. Besides, no matter

what you “do,” it will not bear the unmistakable mark of God’s agape love unless it derives from your new self.

So do not mistake actions in the *old self* (who loves to be religious and loves to be known as someone who serves and does it “right”) for actions which derive from the new self. The actions may look similar on the outside; however, since the source is completely different the fruit that it ultimately bears in the lives of others will over time be made known and will be markedly different.

So, as we go through the following passages, remember that the focus is not really on the “actions” in and of themselves, but it is on the source. If you cling to Jesus not only will the actions be evident, they will bear the unmistakable mark of God’s agape love. However, if you continue to live from the futility of your own mind and are motivated by what pleases you or by trying to preserve the image that you project and want others to believe (in other words, you still live in falsehood), then the selfish nature of your actions will over time be known by all. Which, by the way, is the irony of living from the *old self*; the very things you want to avoid will come back and bite you with a vengeance and will eventually become your reality. What you try and get you will not receive and what you try and disguise will be unmasked. It is the way of the Spirit. Let’s pick up in verse 28.

Ephesians 4:28

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.

There is nothing metaphorical here; the Spirit is speaking quite literally: if you're stealing from others, stop it! I love the way this passage juxtaposes a person who in their *old self* is completely selfish, self centered, and does not care for anyone else with their legitimate ability to live from their *new self* and actually care for others. They can live from a totally contrary nature and instead of choosing a short cut and taking from others they can get a job, do honest work, and be in the position to share with others who are in need.

Why would a Christian steal? I am sure there are many socio-economic as well as psychological reasons, but spiritually it comes down to their not believing that God will be their provider and so they take actions into their own hands and in so doing they hurt others. The *new self*, however, believes God will provide and therefore can be about others and not about the "ME." The *new self* will sacrifice labor, time, and money to ensure that others are cared for and provided for, which is why selfish behavior, like stealing, has no part in the *new self* who like Jesus has been created righteous, holy and true.

This passage also builds on the notion that we are a family and not just a collection of people who go to church together. As such, those of us who can work (or who are allowed to work) are to do so understanding that one of the priorities of the *new self* is caring for those in the body who have need and not just working to spend your money entertaining and caring for yourself. I am not saying you can't spend money entertaining and caring for yourself, it is just that the Spirit says we also have an obligation towards others and we need to put ourselves in a position such that if the need arises we are able and willing to meet it.

Ephesians 4:29

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.

Once again, the *new self* is all about others and not about the “ME.” The new self not only demands a shift from selfish actions to acts of generosity and care but also requires a shift from useless talk to words that build up, encourage and blesses those who hear them. This is one of those verses which we tend to give lip service because the harm seems just a bit more intangible than say something tangible like stealing from someone. But that is not the case. Words are powerful and have a deep impact on our souls. Let’s consider the following:

Proverbs 16:24

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Proverbs 12:14

A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his words, and the deeds of a man's hands will return to him.

Proverbs 18:8

The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts of the body.

Proverbs 25:11

Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances.

Proverbs 10:20-21

The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver, the heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of understanding.

It is obvious how powerful words can be; thus, the Spirit lets us know that if we put on the *new self* our words will be perfect for each situation and will build up and not tear down. When we walk in the Spirit of God, we will be intentional and take into account the person, the way they are wired, what they have been through, what God is doing in them, who else is around, and what is happening in the moment. We will know that some sort of teasing and playing around may be totally appropriate and endearing in some situations and yet wholly inappropriate in others. Further, we will intentionally impart grace to others and be the provider of those words which are sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Thus, we are to not intentionally make someone feel stupid or small and we are to not prey on them because they happen to be weak or vulnerable or because the opportunity to really mess with them is served up to us on a platter. In addition, remember how we were instructed to deal with each other in humility with patience, gentleness, and tolerance in love, well our words should match.

Yes, people can be frustrating and provoking, but in the Spirit we don't have to speak to them with words that are harsh, mean, cruel, and which are intended to hurt by mocking or pointing out flaws in their character or their person.

I know often we ignore the seriousness of what the Spirit is communicating to us in this regard. We feel that if we do not have bad or inappropriate intentions that we are somehow justified and that others just need to deal with it regardless of how reckless some of the things which we say may be. But that is wrong and it is selfish and is "ME" centered. We cannot make exceptions for ourselves by saying that we were just teasing or that we did not mean it, for the issue is not our motives but the fruit. Do your words impart grace or do they not?

The word the ESV translates as "corrupting" literally means to decay. Let no words come out of your mouth that just decay. In other words, the test is do your words produce the enduring mark of God's agape love and give grace to those who hear or will they just decay being worthless, unproductive, or even destructive.

The word translated "building up" is literally a reference to a structure in an architectural sort of way. Therefore, our words are literally to help secure and stabilize a person's soul like rebar or steel beams. Our words are to help the one who is insecure find their security in who they are in God; help the one who is hurting to be comforted by the love that God has for them; help the one who is confused to clearly see the truth of what God has spoken over their lives; help the one who doubts and is full of fear to know that God is good, always faithful, and will always do exactly as He says if they trust themselves to Him; and help the one who is lost find their way back to His arms. Our words are to give strength to the

weak, joy to the one who is rejoicing, and they are to be peaceful to the one who is at rest.

You know that you can tell very easily what impact your words have on others. Look at their body language, look into their eyes, and see how they are internalizing things by the way their body reacts. If you are pouring out grace into their lives there will be a markedly different response compared to when your words are either worthless or are tearing down and destroying their soul. You will know the difference if you look and if you are intentional.

And, by the way, if you find that you are not imparting grace, stop and repent; literally walk away from your *old self* and ask the Lord to help you begin to let your *new self* impart God's love and mercy into that person's soul. Don't wait, just do it right then and there and become an instrument of God's grace.

Ephesians 4:30

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Wow this is very interesting passage. First of all, it totally personalizes the Holy Spirit for us. Remember, the Holy Spirit is not just some invisible entity or presence; but He is a person, just like the Father and the Son. As such, He can be grieved, distressed, or saddened as He has all the emotions of a person.

Now there are some who say that this is not how we are to understand this verse stating that if God could be saddened that He would somehow not be

immutable or unchanging. But that is silly and is a conclusion that the attribute of God's immutability does not require us to conclude. God has a full range of emotions and He expresses them throughout the scripture; after all, He gave them to us as we have been made in His image.

In addition, it is entirely consistent with what we know about God: He hates all things that are evil and takes pleasure in all things that are good (we just have to remember that only God is good). So for Him to be saddened by evil and yet rejoice with righteousness is part and parcel with His character and is consistent with His immutability—He will never rejoice in evil and will never be saddened by righteousness.

So how is the Holy Spirit grieved? I want to make this next point very clear. The Holy Spirit is not grieved over sin but over the effect that sin has on His ability to rule and reign in our hearts. Remember, the issue of sin is no longer an issue of sin in terms of permanently separating us from the Godhead. Jesus dealt with sin on the cross and declared that His work was finished and there was nothing else to be done by anyone—it was all finished! Therefore, according to **Romans 5:1**, our faith has given us peace with God. The idea is that we have been joined to Him and there is nothing that can separate us from Him or Him from us (see also **Romans 8:35-39**).

But sin does grieve the Spirit in that when we choose to live by our *old self* He is evicted from those rooms that rightfully belong to Him; as such, our fellowship with Him is restricted and limited until we once again invite Him back into those rooms and give Him His proper abode in our hearts.

The Spirit knows that we are never more safe, more secure, more protected

and more provided for than when His wisdom rules and reigns within our soul. He knows that when we give ourselves to our *old self* that it only produces death in our lives. But He wants us to experience His life all the time and He wants us to know His peace, His joy, His power, and His strength every moment of our lives. He loves us that much; and it grieves Him or makes Him sad for us when we decide to let ourselves be hurt and live even for a moment without His miraculous provision for every area of our lives.

The Spirit knows how needy and weak we are and how only He can provide for us what we need. But everything He has promised comes **only** with the presence of the Son—by our choosing to be in relationship with Jesus as a person and let Him into all the rooms and hidden closets within our soul; there is no other way.

Now just because the Spirit is grieved or saddened does not mean that He is disappointed in us—for that is not possible and that would be inconsistent with what we know to be true from scripture. After all, our High Priest knows and sympathizes with our weaknesses; which is why we are told to come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it (**Hebrews 4:15-16**). Besides, He knows everything anyways, He even knows our thoughts before they are formed in our heads and He knows what we are going to say even before we say it (**Psalms 139:1-6**); thus, He cannot be disappointed for He knows in advance what we are going to do. But He can be grieved as He desires for us to always be one with Him in perfect unity and fellowship (**John 17:21**) and it does sadden Him when we choose death instead of life.

Now, grieving the Spirit is a serious offense. He is our seal of redemption; thus,

He is always with us and will always be with us but He does not like being kicked out into the hallway of our heart. Therefore, in His jealous love He will go to war against our *old self* in an attempt to put down His enemy such that we will never again choose to give ourselves to this hideous foe. We see this in the Old Testament. There are actually only 2 passages in the OT that specifically refer to grieving the Holy Spirit (***Isaiah 63:10*** and ***Psalms 106:33***) and a third (***Psalms 78:40***) which generally refers to the way the nation of Israel grieved God.

But I want us to look at the passage in Isaiah as it shows us how God deals with our *old self* in order to remind us why we need to live from the *new self*. This is captured in how He dealt with the nation of Israel.

Isaiah 63:7-14

I shall make mention of the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has granted them according to His compassion and according to the abundance of His lovingkindnesses. For He said, "Surely, they are My people, sons who will not deal falsely." So He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.

Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses. Where is He who

brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them, who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name, who led them through the depths? Like the horse in the wilderness, they did not stumble; as the cattle which go down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest. So You led Your people, to make for Yourself a glorious name.

Does not this story of the nation of Israel capture perfectly how He deals with us as sons of God? He saved us, He redeemed us, and He carries us. But too often we forget what He has done for us and we go back to our old ways and live from the futility of our own minds. We rebel against Him and present ourselves to our *old self* and in so doing we grieve the Holy Spirit of God. So He turns Himself against us (our *old self*) and becomes our enemy and fights against us and all that we do (**James 4:4-5**).

He does this so we will remember the days of old and all the ways He moved to save us and deliver us from ourselves and from our old life of slavery. He wants us to remember what it is like to live in the joy and peace of His presence. He wants us to crave for the days where we knew that His Spirit was in the midst of all that we did and was everywhere we went such that we were able to rest. And He wants us to once again turn to Him so He can give us life to the glory of His name.

By the way, **Psalm 78**, which I referenced, paints this same picture over and over in its 72 verses and clearly shows the way the Lord's anger was mounted against Israel because they did not believe in God and did not trust in His

salvation. You should go and read it and you will get a feel for how serious God is about our not grieving the Holy Spirit.

We must remember that He is a jealous God and in His jealous love for you He will without hesitation go to war against your *old self* and believe me, from one who has experienced this, it is better to remember what He has done for you, to believe in Him, to believe in His salvation, and to trust yourself completely to Him. He offers you peace and rest—by all means you should take it!

Open those doors and let Him in and then absolutely refuse from there on out to listen to the futility of your mind for it is always out to deceive you and will always lead to death! Instead remain with Him and He will shepherd you according to the integrity of His heart and He will guide you with His skillful hands (***Psalm 78:72***).

We will stop here and pick up next week in verse 31.

Let's Pray