

## **Speak Truth**

*Sermons on Ephesians*

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 4:25

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*“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.” Ephesians 4:25*

We turn to Ephesians 4 and to verse 25, “Wherefore putting away lying speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.” And we considered last time the initial words of that verse, “Wherefore putting away lying.” As we now turn to the second, the positive commandment that the Lord lays upon us of speaking truth, I’ll remind you of the words of the wise man when he said that “The lip of truth shall endure, or be established, forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.<sup>1</sup> That saying of Solomon can be applied rightly to individuals, and we rightly say that the lip of truth shall be established forever—the truth-speaker shall be in heaven and shall stand, whereas the lying tongue is but for a moment—he shall pass like a vapor, and the liar shall be in the lake of fire.

We rightly apply that to individuals, but also this saying of the wise man describes the members of the body: the lip and tongue. The believer in this present life, to his own distress, realizes there is a constant warfare that affects every member and faculty of his person, that his tongue is sometimes acts for the old man, though in the main it is the instrument of the new man. And in that sense the believer takes comfort from that saying of Solomon, that “The lip of truth shall be established forever, but the lying tongue is but for a moment.” So the believer should take confidence and realize that the body of sin shall be destroyed, that this lying tongue that he must bridle,— he must watch,—he must

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<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 12:19

aim at its utter destruction, and use means to see its death furthered, he does so in the *confidence* that it shall pass away, but the lip of truth shall be established forever.

So in that sense when we look at our text we see that it's telling us, "Putting away lying, speak every man truth," in a sense everything we considered last week about the mortification of lying and the lust underlying it—in a sense all of that is preparation, in a sense that is clearing the ground. That the old man is to be mortified in order for something else to happen, and that something else is continuing, abiding, and indeed will be the exercise of the saints to all eternity, which is—*the speaking of truth*. And then we take up our text, noticing that it contains an imperative. We especially want to focus on that positive imperative in the second part of the verse, "Speak every man truth with his neighbor," and the reason, "We are members one of another."

This is an imperative that is addressed to all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ: "Speak every man truth with his neighbor." This is an imperative that is binding upon the most advanced in grace, *and* the smallest weakling in grace. The most newborn babe in Christ is commanded by the Lord to speak every man truth with his neighbor. It is an imperative that is binding upon one whose gifts and fluidity of speaking are of the highest kind; it is an imperative that is binding upon one whose gifts and ability of speaking are of the least and lowest kind. *All* believers are bound by this imperative. And notice that this is to the believer, whereas [with] the unconverted man there is a night and day difference. The unconverted man doesn't have the new nature dwelling within him. He doesn't have the inward continual enmity and perpetual warfare between the new man against the old. All he has is the old man—he is not able to obey this imperative. And what he needs to do is to make his tree good, and *then* the fruit will be good. He needs to be converted out of death and sin, unto life in God and by the Spirit of Christ. And so he would be misapplying what he hears if he takes this and thinks, "Well, I have ability to speak truth." If you're out of Christ, your first duty is to go to him and to gain life freely given to you by him. I want to address particularly the believer this day as to his duty. We'll consider four things about this imperative, "Speak every man truth with his neighbor."

### **The first thing to consider is the believers' *renewal* unto speaking truth.**

Where Paul says, "Speak every man truth with his neighbor," we need to notice immediately before he has also said that we are to "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." The reason why the believer has any faculty at all for speaking truth is because of what God has done in regenerating him, in making him born again and planting within him this new nature that is called a new man.

The miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ enable us to see things in an outward way. In Mark chapter 7 we read of a man that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. The Lord Jesus put his fingers in his ears, sighed, and looked up to heaven and said, “Ephphathah,” —Be opened, and immediately the man was able to hear, the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plainly.<sup>2</sup> And that is a picture of one aspect of the result of what happens in regeneration. When God regenerates a dead sinner, then all his faculties are renewed, including his tongue—so that he is able to speak for God. The string of his tongue is loosed. His tongue was under a bond, it was under bondage to sin and Satan before; but now it is set free, it is able to speak for God and to speak truth.

We need to study a little then this mystery of regeneration whereby there is a new man in the believer. What is the pattern of this renewal? The pattern after which God renews in regeneration is himself. We read of the “new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” *What a privilege to be made anew in the image of the God of truth!* Pilate, you know, asked the question, “What is truth?” To answer that question we begin with God. God is truth. The false gods are but sham and pretense. They put on an appearance of some shadow of god-ness, but our God is not false like them. He is the true and living God. He declares, *I am that I am*. God is the most true thing that exists. He exists necessarily and eternally, and he needs no witness to his existence and perfections except himself. He is truth, he knows truth, he is the revealer of secrets and mysteries. He speaks truth—his Word is truth, whether it be histories or parables or proverbs, whether commandments or promises or threatenings—the whole word of God is truth. You may and you ought to lean the whole way of your soul body time and eternity upon a single word of God, because he is true and he speaks truth.

Now, what a privilege that the believer is renewed in his regeneration after the image of such a Father! The unbeliever has the Devil for his father, who is a liar and the father of it. But in being born again, the Christian now has the truth within. He has truth—David said that God desires truth in the inward parts. Now the unbeliever, he has certain bits and pieces of the truth, but they are forced upon him. It is like a man who is trying to sleep in the daytime and he shuts his blinds but he can’t keep the light entirely out, it penetrates through the shades. And so [with] the unbeliever certain things he knows are true, but *against his will*. He doesn’t, with his will, love the truth. If he could, he would separate the God of truth out from any particular truth that he knows. He desperately tries to do so. Anything he knows, knows for instance about the creation—he tries to separate it from Creator who is the God of truth, but it’s a vain endeavor. He doesn’t truly love the truth. But it’s different with the believer, because he doesn’t just have truth forced upon him, but he loves the truth; he has a principle of truth within him. So when he hears the truth

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<sup>2</sup> Mark 7:33-35

of God, he gives his hearty amen to it. He appeals to God as a Father, and he loves to hear the voice of God his Father, his own Father in heaven. He echoes the truth of God from his own bosom. He is created after God's likeness.

And what is the means of this renewal that has happened? Well, you know that the creation of the world was a powerful work of God. You know that God made all things of nothing—we emphasize *of nothing* because we're saying that there was no latent ability that the world had towards existing before God created it. All of the ability came from God himself, by his almighty power. He by an infinite amount of power raised the world out of nothingness and to existence. But if possible, when we consider the new creation—the creation of the new man in the new birth—it required a *greater* demonstration of God's power, because not only does the new man need to be created where he didn't exist before, he needs to be created *despite* the previous existence of the old man. This is the state of the Christian in this life, in a way like Rebekah who had two men in her womb who were jostling and fighting with each other. And so the old man resists with everything that is within him the new man, but God created the new man by grace, as it were on top of the old man. And how does he do that? By his Word of truth, by which he begat us, James says, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.<sup>3</sup> By his Word and by his Spirit, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost—these are the mighty means by which God regenerates. Something that the Christian needs to know is that *those means are still mighty now*. God's Word and Spirit are still able to renew him. There are times when the believer, as it were, needs to call in his Creator all over again. David, in his prayer in Psalm 51, said, "Create in me a clean heart."<sup>4</sup> He said that at time when his sins—what kind of sins? Well, yes, a dreadful sin of uncleanness, but also he was entangled in a web of deceit and lies, and so he cries to his Creator all over again as it were "Create in me..." And so the Christian needs to know that the Word and Spirit of God are able to renew him. At the first it was by the Word and Spirit that he was renewed at his root, but now as he fights the battle of the mind he needs to know that the same means are still mighty.

There is a battle of the mind that needs to be fought—there are remaining errors and lies, that's how the old man works, as we were considering last time—but notice it is *not inevitable* for the Christian to be carried before the flood of a wrong idea. It feels that way at times to the believer. There's a falsehood that comes to him with power that entangles his thinking. He has been many times before carried before the power of this error, this lie, and he may begin to despair and think, "Well, there's no use in resisting that," but it's not so, because the Christian has these almighty means of the Word of truth

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<sup>3</sup> James 1:18

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 51:10

and the Spirit of truth, by which he was begotten again at the beginning. So the Christian needs to say, “I will be renewed in the spirit of my mind. Whatever that particular lie is that has intertwined itself with the deceitfulness of my heart, I will lay siege to it like they laid siege to Jericho, I will surround it with the word of God. I will ask God to send down his Holy Spirit, and I won’t give up until that false idea comes falling down flat.” The Christian makes war as David in Psalms 42 and 43,— he keeps telling his soul, “Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him,”<sup>5</sup> or Asaph in the 73rd Psalm, who makes war against this idea that the wicked prosper and get away with it—“Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are of a clean heart.”<sup>6</sup> Or, Mordecai tells Esther to fight the battle of the mind when she’s afraid and she fears the king more than God, he tells her what she should think, he says, think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house—you should fear what God will do to you if you don’t stand up for his people, and you should recognize, what if he’s put you in this spot for just a time as this?<sup>7</sup> But she needed to fight the battle of the mind. And here’s the thrilling truth of the Christian, that in fighting the battle of the mind, he uses the same means by which God begot him to new life when he was dead. He employs the Word and Spirit of God.

In this renewal of the Christian we also need to grasp that this has been a *thorough* renewal, because in our text proceeding it, in the context we read about a new man—“That ye put on the new man.” Now I was telling you before about the old man, and why the old nature is called a *man*, and that’s because he has, fully formed, all his parts and faculties. He is, as it were, ready for action, able to do anything a man can do. The different lusts of the old man work together, strengthen together, cooperate, and so on. Now the same is true of the new man, called a *new man* because all the parts and faculties are there. He’s ready for action, he can do anything a man can do. And so while on the one hand, I was laboring last week to convince you that there yet remains in the holiest of men in this life, there remains a complete and entire old man, the seed of every lust is present there,—though the old man is in a crucified state, still the seed and principle is there, so the old man needs to be constantly watched and kept on the rack, et cetera. The same however is true of the new man, that *the seed and principle of every grace is there*. The new man is not missing his tongue, and so the believer has been renewed to speak truth and speak for God. This is a truth that is actually staggering, because Isaiah, when he sees the Lord, he says, “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips,”<sup>8</sup> and he should say that—and it’s true. It’s true in what respect? It’s true of a holy Isaiah in terms of the

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 42:5

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 73:1

<sup>7</sup> Esther 4:14

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 6:5

old man, which is still there, and still sinful, still wretched, still a matter of his humiliation and godly sorrow.

But it's *not the only truth there is*. I am a man of unclean lips, the believer says. What does Christ say to the believer? The words we were reading before: "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb. Honey and milk are under thy tongue."<sup>9</sup> That's what Christ says to the believer, and you dare not be wiser than Christ. You dare not, believer, say, "This isn't really speaking to me." You need to receive that because of who says it, and because he's wiser than you. Indeed, it's a mystery of free grace, isn't it? We would think—and it's because our thoughts are not as God's thoughts, neither are our ways his ways—our thoughts of his mercy are cramped and small and narrow, but he has better thoughts than we do. We would think, "Well, it can't possibly be that anything truly pleasing to God would be found in me, until such a time as everything that is displeasing to God is totally gone. We would think, surely Christ couldn't plant his own likeness in us while we still have the old man. Christ says he's the lily of the valleys, and so he comes and plants his beautiful lily-likeness in the believer while their old sooty chimney of the old man is still there, still spewing out all that dirty stuff. And we could say, doesn't he know what he's risking? How could he possibly put a new nature in me next to an old nature? And see, he's done so because there's no possible way for him to manifest the utmost degree of the freeness of his love other than by doing what he's done. Lest we should think the new nature is something that we could merit or work towards, he says, "No, let me show you, while the corruption of sin still remains, but the guilt of sin is gone, as far as the east is from the west, while my spouse is under no condemnation, but while that old nature still remains in her, I will plant my likeness within her." And this should embolden the believer, because as we sing, "Thy beauty to the king shall then delightful be," this should encourage and draw the Christian to exercise that new nature in the speaking of truth.

**We've seen something about the believer's *renewal* unto speaking truth, but we also need to consider the believer's *exercise* in speaking truth.**

In Christ renewing and making the believer to be a new creature, there is a principle of grace that is planted—that's what we've been considering, but we need to know something more. It's not enough simply to have the seed and principle of grace planted within. The Spirit of Christ must come, and as we were reading in Song of Solomon 4, "Come, O north wind, come O south, blow upon my garden."<sup>10</sup> The Spirit needs to come and stir up those fragrant graces in the Christian, so that their savor will flow out, so that

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<sup>9</sup> Song of Solomon 4:11

<sup>10</sup> Song of Solomon 4:16

they are exercised in whatsoever he does. So when we say that God requires us to speak truth—“Speak every man truth with his neighbor.” We live in pretty technologically-advanced days, so we can imagine that we could program a robot to speak truth. We could set up a computer with speakers and make it read the Bible, and then—would the robot or computer be speaking truth? In a certain sense, but this is not the requirement of God. God requires far more than a robotic parroting or sending forth certain sounds and syllables; that’s only the *form* of speaking the truth, and we know that with our God he requires not only an outward form, but he requires the *heart* of the matter. And that’s why, for the Christian to be doing what God requires, it means he needs to be exercised in his heart with certain graces.

And what graces need to be acting with his outward act of speaking the truth? Well to simplify things, I’ll say that there are two, which are faith and love. The Christian needs to exercise faith in order to be speaking the truth as God requires. And it’s true that we need to make a sanctified use of our senses and of our reason. They are faculties that God has given us to know truth, and we should use them as sanctified. However, it is principally faith by which the believer knows truth and speaks truth. Psalm 116, “I believe therefore I have spoken.” And whatever we speak we ought to speak because we believe what we’re saying. Speaking the truth by faith means that we are speaking in the sight of God. Suppose that it’s one of the lesser consequential things that we’re speaking about, suppose that we’re engaging with someone and speaking about the weather. Well then, we should still do so in faith, otherwise how can this be pleasing or acceptable to God? Whatever’s not of faith is sin.<sup>11</sup> When you speak about the weather, you should speak about the weather according to the strict standards of truth, but it should also proceed from faith. So that when you say, “It’s a pleasant day today, isn’t it?” Then you should think, I know the God of heaven that causes the weather. And as we speak to one another, even if it’s not explicitly acknowledged right out of the gate, we’re speaking about God’s providence, I am speaking truth in the sight of God. That should always be the Christian’s exercise. The Christian should speak the truth by faith because it’s faith by which he gets a treasury of truth within. How is it that the Christian has anything to say, that he’s not just blank? It’s because he’s a man of Psalm 1, he’s meditating in the law of the Lord day and night. And he holds fast, meditates upon, and brings forth by faith. He speaks the truth by faith in imitation of his God. You see, the fact that the Christian lives by faith affects the way that he converses with others. The Christian lives by faith because he says, every word of God is true, like silver refined in an earthen furnace. The Word of God is utterly reliable. Everything I do, I do because I believe the Word of God. And if the Word of God were not true, I would be the most miserable of all men, because I am staking everything that I think, say, and do, and refrain from doing, on the Word of

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<sup>11</sup> Romans 14:23

God being true. Therefore, he that lives by faith will speak words that will be reliable to other people. If God's Word were not reliable, I'm sunk; therefore whatever I say to another will be golden and reliable. So the Christian speaks the truth by faith.

But the Christian also speaks the truth in love. These are the two great graces, the first and the last, as it were, among the graces. We saw in verse 15 where that's explicitly said, "But speaking the truth in love, may now up into him in all things." 1st Corinthians 13, "Charity rejoices with the truth."<sup>12</sup> Why is that? There's a connection between the truth and charity. Just think for a moment about how the world speaks about these things. So the world speaks about communication. What is communication? It is a way of making something common to someone else, namely in this case by words. Communication is a way of sharing by speaking. Why should we communicate at all? We should communicate out of charity, or love. Why should we make something common to someone else? Why should we take what we have and give it or share it? It's love that dictates that. Now malice would take something that is evil and push it upon someone else, but charity would take that which is good and impart it unto another. So what does charity do? It's faith that goes to a God of truth and receives his truth, and truth is good because God is true. Faith receives truth from God; *charity gives forth truth to others because truth is a good, and charity seeks the good of a neighbor.*

This tells us—one implication of that is—to be unduly silent would be uncharitable. Now we're not always supposed to be speaking; there's a time to speak and a time to be silent. However, if we were to be silent when we're called upon, either by a direct duty of the Word of God or by circumstance where it becomes evident that the thing to do to glorify God and to do good unto my neighbor, is to speak,—if we were to remain silent when we should be speaking, that would be uncharitable. That could take several expressions. Someone who is malicious toward another—we sometimes speak about giving a cold shoulder to someone, withholding certain communications from them, communications of affection or understanding. And this we all recognize (or should) that that is an expression of malice. It is the opposite of charity. In other cases, undue silence may arise through cowardice or fear, and unwillingness to stand for the truth because I might suffer harm if I speak, or I don't know how I'll be perceived. That is not a noble thing, that is flatly uncharitable to your neighbor. Also, sometimes through laziness, through not exerting oneself, there is an uncharitable and undue silence because it does take work to communicate or to give. No doubt our Lord Jesus, his great labor was to give himself and lay down his life. To clam up just because it's hard to speak, is flatly uncharitable and contrary to the law of love. Now it's charity that is the great rule. If we want to know, when should we speak, how should we speak, what should we say, the one part of God's

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:6



rule is truth. It needs to be strictly in accordance with things as they are, whatever we say. The other part of God's rule is charity. This will teach me, if I think I want to do unto my neighbor as I would have done unto myself, if I love my neighbor as myself, this will teach me when and what and how to speak. So faith and love—the Christian needs to exercise these in speaking truth.

**To continue, we also need to consider the believer's *neighborliness* is speaking truth, because our text says, "Speak every man truth with his neighbor."**

Now this, on the one hand, it implies that God is at work in his providence, and God chooses our neighbors for us. He places certain people in our lives, in proximity to us. That's of course the most basic idea of a neighbor, someone who is close to us, near to us. Sadly a lot of times our literal neighbors, we don't have much that we share with them, but our neighbor is anyone with whom we cross paths in this life. Anyone with whom we have a shared life and experience to one degree or another. And wherever there is shared life with someone because I'm this person's neighbor, there should also be a communication and a mutual interchange of truth, of speaking truth every man with his neighbor. And we know that we need to do deeds as well, we need to serve our neighbors by love, but we also have this duty of speaking to them. And that can begin at a very simple level. I referenced before, you're speaking to someone about the weather. "A pleasant day, isn't it?" you say to the person across the counter. Well, make sure that that is a truthful communication. Even in such a simple interchange of a comment, we ought to make sure that what we say is true because any kind of report is a report about what? A report about the providence of God. If we say this thing happened, we are speaking to our neighbor in that shared communion of life we have with our neighbor, to bring them a report, so they will know God in his providence. And so we need to ensure that what we say is truthful. Likewise, *promises*. When we live with others in a family, in the church, also in the midst of the world, we need to be able to expect what's coming next and to make plans— therefore, whatever promises we make to one another should be truthful promises. Also, living in proximity to others, inevitably we're going to sin against them. And what kind of speaking truth with our neighbor is called for when we've sinned against each other? That is *confession of sin*. And therefore we ought to be truthful in our confessions of sin, one with another.

God chooses neighbors and places them near to us, and notice how he requires of us a mutual interchange of truthful speaking with our neighbors. So he might have said, "Speak every man *to* his neighbor," but he didn't. He said, "Speak every man truth *with* his neighbor." This implies that there is to be a mutual intercommunication with our neighbors. We are to make sure on our own parts, that we are contributing only truth to this interchange. It also means that we're to speak every man with *his* neighbor. Notice

how that makes it personal and individual .We could say, “Speak every man truth to every other man.” We could think of it in terms of a megaphone. And if we’re going to pick up a megaphone, then by all means we need to speak truth into the megaphone. But what’s stated in our text is a little more focused in. We have one individual and he has a neighbor—his neighbor. And there’s to be a communication from one to the other, and then back again. We remember about Joseph when he was in the prison, he noticed the facial expressions of his fellow prisoners, and he ended up speaking life-changing truth to both of them. To one of them, the butler, he said, you’re going to put the cup in Pharaoh’s hand again. [To] the baker, Pharaoh’s going to lift up your head; he was executed; the birds came and ate the bread off the basket on his head.<sup>13</sup> Now this, he spoke truth to his neighbor, but first he noticed something about his neighbors, he drew out what they were thinking. He drew out their circumstances and then spoke truth to them, personally fitted to them. The wise man said, “Counsel in the heart of a man is deep waters, but a man of understanding will draw it out.”<sup>14</sup> And so the first part of our duty of speaking truth with a neighbor begins with noticing and observing our neighbor and drawing them out, so that we can speak personally and appropriately to them, remembering that we ourselves are flesh and blood, like they are; shaping what we say, when we speak the truth by our own experience, sympathy, and understanding. We ought, in speaking the truth with our neighbor, to remember our particular relation with each neighbor. Is this a particular neighbor, is this neighbor my superior, my inferior, or my equal? I must always speak truth, but if to a superior, then with greater meekness and deference and so on. We ought to think of the various needs of each particular neighbor. Does this neighbor need to be instructed in something? Has my neighbor revealed that there’s something he doesn’t know? Or misunderstands? Then let me speak to instruct. If my neighbor needs to be stirred up to a duty, then let me exhort him. If he’s been taken in a sin, I should reprove him. If he is sinking under the weight of troubles, then I should encourage and comfort him. But we need to speak, when we speak truth, we have to speak personally to each one; each man, truth with his neighbor.

**But there is yet another thing. Having considered the believer’s neighborliness in speaking truth, we need consider the believer’s special encouragement in speaking truth.**

The last words of our verse, “Speak every man truth with his neighbor, *for we are members one of another.*” We have neighborly duties towards anyone that we meet, in the world, to speak truth to them, but this is focused upon the relation believers have one with another within the body of Christ. And I told you briefly last time, that one reason

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<sup>13</sup> Genesis 40

<sup>14</sup> Proverbs 20:5

lying is so deadly is because it cuts the sinews of the organic body of Christ. How can we edify each other if lying words are spoken? This destroys trust, it dismembers the body of Christ to lie. By the other token, to speak truth is that which *edifies* the body. The speaking of the truth is the lifeblood that carries the nourishment between all the members of the body of Christ. To say that we are members one of another reflects the great mystery that believers are united unto Jesus Christ. He is the Head; faith is that which knits every believer to the Head. But then because of that there's a second mystery, which is that there's a mutual union of the members one with another within the body of Christ. Those that we know most closely, and even those in other periods of time and history, and other places on the planet. But there is a spiritual union and knitting together of the whole body, and it's through speaking truth that the body edifies itself, as we saw earlier in the chapter.

There are several things to consider here, and one is that if you are but even the lowest member of Christ, if you are even but the weakest and newest of believers, then you have a duty and also an ability to speak unto the edification of other members, because look how this is two directional. We are members one of another. It doesn't say, now Christ ascended up into heaven and he gave some to be apostles, pastors and teachers, and it's a good thing that everyone else can be linked to the pastors and teachers, so that edification can flow in one direction from the pastors and teachers to everyone else. This is not what is being said. There is a mutual connection, there is a two way street between the members of Christ. Paul when he says that he's coming to Rome to preach the gospel to them, he says that he wants to be comforted together by their mutual faith.<sup>15</sup> So who was greater in the church than Paul? Who more gracious, who more gifted? But he says when I come to Rome, I am going to receive comfort by observing, hearing of your mutual faith with me. You have an ability to edify others. If you're knit to Christ, then you may profit every member of the body.

And to take that a step further, notice how wisely the Lord has framed together the body of Christ so that every member's duty is important. There is a distribution of the body edifying itself. Even in our physical body there are some members that are at the extremity; the foot for instance is far away from the heart and head and so on. But there are other members that closer down to that foot, to where it is at the extremity of the body. And just so, it often is the case within the body that there are some other members of the body that you yourself personally are in the best position to speak the truth unto, unto their edification. There are some for whom your experience has particularly suited you, to speak to them in a way that will be able to open their hearts, and they will be able to receive. Providentially, you might be the one who has the greatest contact with

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<sup>15</sup> Romans 1:12

someone else or a history with them, et cetera. But how will every member of the body be edified, except if each one of us, every man set himself on speaking the truth with his neighbor? We ought not to think, well we'll sit back and let the pastors and teachers do everything. This edification of the body, it happens in the context of an ascended Christ having given official and stated teachers of his word to the church. We'd be sunk if we closed our eyes to that, if we despised preaching. We'd be sunk, but by the same token let's not think, the preachers will do everything by what they say. Exercise your own faculties and your own mouth to speak truth.

You have an ability to edify, you have also Christian, a motive to edify. So whatever you lay out in terms of labor to edify your brother is really in a sense done for your own profit. You'll never fail to be profited yourself if you promote the furtherance of your brother's salvation. In fact, you need to promote your brother's salvation as earnestly as you seek to promote your own. That's true obviously within the physical body, that we don't say, "Well, this member is unimportant, even though there's been an abrasion in the skin and there's infection setting in," and "That member of the body, what does it matter to me if there's an infection down there?—as long as my face still looks hale and hearty." That's abominable thinking, and just so we ought to say, I shouldn't be content to be in a flourishing state myself when another member is diseased. There's some sin that needs to be purged out of him by timely and loving reproof. Likewise we should say, the weak member of the body that's not at times taken much nourishment, let me spend myself on nourishing that member of the body because I'll never lose my labor, because *where the one member of the body is made stronger; then the whole body is made stronger*. You yourself will never advance the way you ought to, and the way you long to, in your sanctification, if others aren't advancing with you. And so this his a motive to seek to speak the truth in love.

There is implied in this description also a naturalness, if you will, in the work of edifying through the speaking of truth. The members of the body, they have a constant interchange through blood vessels and nerves, and who knows whatever layers of things that science only begins to peer into dimly. There is a natural, living, warm and organic connection between the members of the body. And that is in contrast of the way, if we have even flesh and blood relative who doesn't know the Lord, there is a wall there, there is a blankness there, there is an absence of ability to communicate and share. Sometimes we hear of things about organ transplants, sometimes we hear about them failing. A member in a physical body that is rejected by the body. And so with someone who's not a member of Christ, there's not a naturalness of communication, there is a gap—an inability to interchange with them. However, with the brethren in the Lord—even if we don't have a long personal history with them, they're from a different place—yet there is a readiness, in which they love and receive the same truth which we feed our souls upon. And this is a

special encouragement unto the believer speaking truth, for we are members one of another.

May the Lord then use these things. I believe we were convicted last week as the Lord shone the spotlight of his Word and told us to put away lying, yet we're grateful even that took us to the cross of Christ. But even that work of mortification, we ought not to stop there, but we ought to recognize what God has done for the believer in making a new nature in him by regeneration, and we ought to exercise that new nature. We ought to, at the same time, starve the old man, and see that tongue of the old man withered and dried up, and to feed the new man by the means of grace, exercising all the members, especially as we've seen this morning, the speaking of truth—which is our duty. Amen.

### **Prayer**

*O Lord our God, the God of truth, in whom there is no darkness at all, —the God who cannot lie and who promised before the world began, who promised the life that is in Christ Jesus to be given to us in time, —the God, none of whose words have ever fallen to the ground, and who brought the seed of Abraham into the land, who brought the seed of the woman into the world, and whose Word shall yet be fulfilled in the future when the very heavens are rolled up as a garment—we pray, make us to be a people who speak the truth. And we ask it for Jesus' sake, Amen.*