

Sermon Title: Walk In Truth
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:26-28 (Ephesians #30)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-13-22

In our march through the Book of Ephesians, where we've been interrupted for a few weeks to do other wonderful things, we are in a section of this book that deals with the walk of the "new man." Chapter 4 begins with Paul urging the brethren "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted). "Walk" is how you live (e.g., Rom. 6:4; 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25; Eph. 5:8; Ph. 3:17-18; Col. 1:10; 2:6; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:1; 1 Jn. 1:6-7; 2:6).

We've learned about our responsibility to rigorously "lay aside the old man" and "put on the new man"; and as we come to our section where we're going to be dealing today, the lead-in to that is Chapter 4, Verses 20-24—"But you did not learn Christ in this way"—in other words, he's talking about the futility of the way the unbelievers walk—"if indeed you heard Him and were taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus—to lay aside, in reference to your former conduct, the old man, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new man, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (LSB).

We massaged that passage pretty thoroughly. We took a little side-trip to explain the vital ministry of the Body of Christ to itself and to its members, which has come to be known as "Biblical Counseling"—based squarely on this text, carefully applied in light of the authority and the sufficiency of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:3).

Now, before we enter our text, I want to make sure that we come with the right mindset. Look with me at a picturesque description of what true salvation actually accomplishes in the heart of anyone who comes to God by faith to receive His grace and to be "made alive" (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13). This is from the Old Testament, in the context of living during the era of the Mosaic Law; and this is in the Book of Deuteronomy, given just before Israel entered the Promised Land, but it illustrates how we can tell if a person is a genuine believer. It's Deuteronomy Chapter 30, Verse 6—"Moreover, Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed, to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live" (LSB). It's a process of spiritual surgery that removes the old and lets you stand new and clean in Him (cf. Jer. 24:7; Ezek. 36:25-27; Jn. 3:3, 5; Titus 3:5).

Now, those words might have kind of a familiar ring: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul..." Why would that sound so familiar to you? Well, maybe you've been bumping around in the Gospels, and you know what Jesus said: Matthew Chapter 22, Verses 35 through 37—"One of them"—one of those in the crowd—"a lawyer"—that is, one of the scribes who were the scholarly wing of the Pharisees—"asked Him"—that's Jesus—"a question, testing Him, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' And He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' "

Now, I want you to keep *that* in mind, and the idea that salvation is a transformation of the heart; you've been made into "a new creature...in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17). I want you to keep that in mind as we continue to navigate through the end of Ephesians Chapter 4, because there are seven imperatives in this passage—seven commands. We're going to

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see three of them today. They *must* be understood in the context of the fact that "in Christ," you *are* a "new creature"; your mind has been renewed (Ac. 16:14; 1 Cor. 2:12); now you are all new. So there's a *new* orientation to God (1 Ki. 8:58), a *new* orientation to His Word (Rom. 7:22), a *new* orientation to other people (1 Thess. 3:12).

And I say that because, with a series of rapid-fire commands, you could let yourself mentally turn this paragraph into a moralistic lesson about how to be a good person. Now, I'm all in favor of you being a better and better person—I mean, I'd like it if you don't bite my head off when I ask you a question—but don't let this make you think that you *become* a Christian by obeying a list of commands. That's not possible (Gal. 2:16).

The point of this passage, the point of these commands, is that if you *are* "saved by grace through faith" (Eph. 2:8), *this* is the direction that the Holy Spirit will guide you (Ezek. 36:27; Phil. 2:13; 2 Thess. 3:5). Doing the things here will be the *evidence* that you "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

I was talking to Scott Basolo yesterday about how hard it is to preach after the week you've been at Shepherd's Conference, because you already have your sermon in mind, and then you've heard 29 things that make you say, "Oh, that's so good, I have to say that! Oh, I have to mix that in!" I'm going to restrain myself a little bit, but I am going to borrow something from Paul Twiss. Now, I cannot say it *nearly* as well as he can, because he's English, and so he can make this sound far more scholarly and hyper-spiritual than I can. But he made the point: "You can't merely exhort the imperative; you must exult in the indicative." Now, does that give you goosebumps, or what? What he's saying is: You can't just give the *orders*; you have to understand who you are, ontologically: you have been made new in Christ—therefore, these imperatives make sense; these command should be resonating with your soul: "Yes, Lord, *that's* what I want to be like! *That's* how I want to act, because of what You have made me!" (cf. Ps. 50:15; 116:12; Gal. 2:20)

Here's the outline that I would have used, had I accomplished all four verses last time; but we'll just lump them together today. Here are three of these seven imperatives: Speak Truth (vs. 25), Be Angry (vss. 26-27), and Stop Stealing (vs. 28).

Last time we were here in Ephesians, we looked at Chapter 4, Verse 25—and we parked there, to be honest: "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another." That emphasizes and applies a quotation from Zechariah Chapter 8, Verse 16, emphasizing the important fact that "we are members of one another." Apart from your brothers and sisters in Christ, you're not complete (cf. Rom. 12:5). We *need* each other! We *belong to* each other. And I would commend that sermon to you, in case you didn't hear it, or if you need to review it.

Paul has said, "Laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you" here in Verse 25, applying the principle of having "laid aside the old man," you're going to now "put on the new man" (Col. 3:10, LSB). So, being a Christian is inextricably linked to *talking* like a Christian (Eph. 4:29; Jas. 1:26).

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Now, "we are members of one another"—that's an emphasis here that we have to remember. As we talk about these ways of interacting, it's because we belong to each other (Phil. 2:3-4).

When I reentered the country from Russia, I shamelessly and joyfully exercised my privilege, because I am part of a group that is part of the procedure known as "Global Entry." If you've ever been out of the country and you come back in to a major airport, you know how it is: you get ushered along, and then they say, "Enter right here," and you go down the line that goes down this way, and you turn around and you go down the line that goes this way to the other end to the room, and then you turn around in the line that goes this way; and later in the afternoon, you get to the customs guy, who then says, "Oh, yeah, you're who you say you are. You can come on in. Go get your suitcase." Well, if you have "Global Entry," *I skip that line!* I went over to this place over here. I walked up, and they'd made it even easier than it was the last few times I entered; this time I walked up, and it just said, "Put your face in this frame and push the button." I put my face in the frame, pushed the button, and it says, "Welcome home, Mr. Harris." *That's cool!* I mean, about 15 or 20 minutes *at least* that it saved me! I belong to that club! I get in *just* by smiling—but I didn't even smile; just showing my face, and I get in!

Now, a lot of people think of Christianity that way. It's the "heavenly" version of "Global Entry." I just show my face and I get in, and *that's* what it's all about! Well, you know what? That's an *abominable* illustration of what it means to be a Christian. All of us who went through "Global Entry" walked up, took our picture, got the receipt, and we zipped on to beat everybody else to Baggage Claim. None of us stuck around and said, "Hey, welcome home! Glad to see ya! Hey, how 'bout we stop and pray together? Can we have a little Bible study? Let's celebrate that we belong to this..." *No*, that wasn't it!

But that's the Body of Christ! *Yes*, you get "Heavenly Entry"—not based on *anything* you did; when you go and show your face for the "Heavenly Entry," God looks and says, "Oh, Jesus!" He sees us clothed in His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; cf. Is. 61:10; Phil. 3:9). But between now and then, *we belong to each other!* And this, my friends, in this series of imperatives, shows part of how *we demonstrate* that we belong to each other.

So let's move on to the next of these commands, Number 2 in our outline: Be Angry. Ephesians 4:26—"Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger."

The word "angry" here is a Greek word that you didn't know that you knew; it's the Greek word *orgē*. If you were to see it spelled, transliterated into English, it would look like "orgy." What's that all about? Well, *orgē* doesn't mean that in *that* sense, primarily; it means "a boiling over." It's God's settled attitude against sin that one day will be poured out as His "wrath" (Rev. 19:15).

And by the way, this is also a quote from an Old Testament passage; in this case, it comes from the Septuagint version so Psalm 4, Verse 4—"Be angry, and do not sin."

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Let's make a couple of observations there. First, understand: It is possible to be angry without sinning. In other words, not all anger is sinful. Most of the times when we get angry, yes, we are sinning; but not all anger is sinful.

And would you notice: Yes, it does mean what it says—you are *commanded* to "be angry"! It doesn't say, "If you happen to become angry, don't sin." Now, that's good advice. If you become angry, don't sin; you do not have to sinfully express your anger. But that's not what it says. It says: "Be angry." It's a command to be angry; and it's even one of those present imperatives, which means that this should be your consistent response in certain situations. So let's see if we can apply that a little bit.

The first part is fairly easy. When you get angry, understand: You *can* handle it without sinning. That might seem foreign to you if you come from a family or a culture where, to vent your frustration means that dishes get broken and people scurry for cover, or something like that. But we need to think it through. You don't have to have a sinful reaction to anger.

But we also need to figure out: What *is* it that I'm *commanded* to be angry about? Well, the key to this is to be angry at what makes *God* angry, what insults *His* character, what contradicts *His* truth (e.g., Num. 25:11; Ps. 69:9; 97:10; 139:19-22).

For example—I'll show you that there's a godly kind of anger—First Kings 11, Verse 9— "Now Yahweh was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from Yahweh, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice" (LSB). God is *highly displeased*—you might even say "angry"—toward those who profess to know Him, and turn away from Him, even temporarily (Lk. 9:62; Heb. 10:38).

Or, Psalm 7:11—Here's a description of God: "God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day." Boy, if you're perfectly righteous, there are a lot of things in this world that are going to tick you off! "God...has indignation *every day*" toward that which robs Him of His glory.

Jesus—the only sinless Man who has ever lived (Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22)—illustrated this kind of anger when some hypocrites were upset with Him for suggesting healing a man on the Sabbath. We read this in Mark Chapter 3, Verse 5—"After looking around at them with anger..."

I remember preaching through Mark, and getting to that verse. It was glorious—the man had a withered hand; the miracle is amazing. But I just spent some time standing there and thinking, "If you were in that crowd, and the Son of God *looked at you* 'with anger,' *whoa!* I'm amazed people weren't *incinerated!*" "Looking around at them with *anger*"—why?—"grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored."

Or, remember the two occasions when Jesus made a whip, and then used it to clear the hypocrites—the "money changers"—out of the temple (Matt. 21:12; Jn. 2:15).

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Understand: The main things that make God angry are sin—obviously—hypocrisy, false doctrine. God does not share His "glory" (Is. 42:8; 48:11). He is the *only* One to be glorified (Ps. 115:1). And He does not comingle His truth with error (Ps. 119:128, 160). He does not advertise His message as, "Choose My brand—it's a little better than the others!" No, it's: "Everything else is *wrong*, and this is right!" (cf. Is. 43:11; 45:21).

Are these the kinds of things that make *you* angry? This concept that God doesn't share His glory made me think of First Samuel Chapter 5, the first six verses. The Philistines got ahold of the Ark of the Covenant; it turned out to be a bit of a problem. They "took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod." That was the place of their big temple.

"Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon." That's one of their main gods; a big temple, a big idol, a big statue of Dagon. "Then the Ashdodites arose early the next morning, and behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of Yahweh." They must have figured, "Oh, those darn teenage vandals! They got in and they pushed our statue over!" Well, there was more to it than that.

"So they took Dagon and set him in his place again. But they arose early the next morning, and behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of Yahweh." What great symbolism! God tips over the idol face-down toward the representation of the true God!

This time, it's even more: "And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor all who enter Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day. Now the hand of Yahweh was glorious against the Ashdodites, and He made them desolate and struck them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territories" (LSB). *Don't try to make God share His glory!* (cf. Ex. 20:4-5; 34:14; Deut. 32:21a)

I've travelled my share. I did something this week that I've never done before: Never in all my travels have I taken a picture of a drawer in a hotel room, but I did this week. Actually, I'd just been working on this sermon; I'd get up in the morning and whittle a little bit more on what we were going to do today. And I happened to open the drawer in the nightstand next to the bed, and this is what I saw: A Bible—King James Version, of course—next to the Book of Mormon. I thought, "What a perfect symbolic representation! That's First Samuel Chapter 5!" You have the false next to the true, as if they are equal—*they're not!* As if they are compatible—*they're not!* As a matter of fact, if you believe the one on the right, it says that the ones on the left are all an abomination! The ones who believe that—you have to mix the two together, but only as the second one reinterprets and explains away the meaning of the first one!

Anger guided by godly reason—understanding that the glory of God is unique, and He stands alone; we don't mingle His glory with anything else—understanding that is good and positive and necessary. Apathy toward issues regarding truth—that's not good. A lot

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of people dodge their Christian responsibility to "speak truth in love" by saying, "Well, who am *I* to judge?" If you're zealous for the truth, you're going to learn to hate any perversion of the truth, and it *will* make you angry (Ps. 119:102, 128; 139:21-22).

So, look again at this verse. It is a command: "Be angry, and yet do not sin." But understand, there are *two* commands in that verse: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger." This one uses a slightly different word for "anger." This one means "an angry mood," so this is describing when you feel that sense of irritation, exasperation, when you're a little embittered by something. Anger can very easily degenerate into resentment, hatred, unforgiveness, et cetera.

Now, you can't get any more practical than this. When you deal with something that makes you angry—even if it is a perfectly righteous indignation because the Lord has been insulted, or His Word has been perverted, but *especially* if it's just *you* being angry—you only have until the end of the day to resolve those angry feelings. "Do not let the sun go down on your anger."

And so today, you're saying, "Oh, whew, I have an extra hour to deal with my anger!" Only man could think, "I can change the positions of the hands on a clock and create more daylight." And obviously, that's a metaphor—"Do not let the sun go down on your anger." I mean, if you lived in the north of Alaska, you'd have six months.

It means: Don't let it fester, don't let it breed, don't let it turn into bitterness, don't let it turn in to anxiety, certainly don't let it turn into foolish or filthy talk or insulting or verbally attacking someone (Gal. 5:15). Ecclesiastes Chapter 7, Verse 9...and by the way: written by Solomon, with whom God was angry; he did learn some lessons. "Do not be eager in your spirit to be vexed, for vexation rests in the bosom of fools" (LSB). Don't you know some people who, you swear when they get up in the morning, they're saying, "What can I do to be vexed today? I have to have something to get riled up about!" Well, just turn on cable news; whatever side of the spectrum you're on, you can find something to be angry about.

But realize: If you belong to Christ, if your mind has been renewed, if you're a "new creature," you want to *strip off the old man*, you want to put on the new. You don't want to stay vexed, angry, bitter, hostile, dejected, depressed, anxious. Don't let the sun go down on that kind of thought.

The famous theologian you've heard of, Tiger Woods—you may or may not know his theology; it's not great—but he has a personal application of this principle. He doesn't say, "Do not let the sun go down on your anger"; he calls it the "Ten Step Rule." Tiger Woods, as great as he is at what he does, whenever he hits a bad shot, he might get angry—as a matter of fact, he does, because he has a ridiculously high standard; and I think he owns the all-time record for having been fined by the PGA tour for things that he has muttered in the hearing of a microphone on the golf course—but, here's his rule: He makes sure to forget about that thing that made him angry within ten steps down the fairway.

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Now, he's not a Christian. He's not talking about how *this* is how to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." It's totally self-serving on his part, but it illustrates that living the way that God designs—*this is practical!* You *do not have the right so stay angry!* And when you do, *everybody loses!* You insult God. You defame His Word. You make yourself miserable. And the people around you are walking on eggshells, scared to set you off again.

"Do not let the sun go down on your anger." Don't let anger reside in your heart. Now, being frustrated, being annoyed, being in a state of having an anxious thought about something—that's a normal human response, especially of fallen people living in a world riddled with sin. But, *don't let it fester!* We must forgive; and if possible, we need to express our forgiveness to each other. Stay tuned for the next few verses here. We must never back down on the truth, but we must always seek to resolve the issues (1 Cor. 13:6; 2 Tim. 2:24-25; Jas. 3:17).

So, back to our text, the other verse: "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.*" Here's what happens when you choose not to resolve anger: The Devil quickly seizes your anger—even if it's proper anger—and he will try to turn it into a grudge, a grievance, a resentment, a justification for bitterness or nasty talk.

Deal with issues so that you don't give an opportunity for Satan to take advantage of your anger for his purposes. If you find yourself repeatedly thinking about past wrongs, if you find yourself bringing up past sins of others, you need to rethink how you deal with angry feelings (Prov. 10:12; 19:11). You had until sundown *that day* to deal with it. If you're still hanging onto it, let go! Do you know that the essence of the word translated "forgive" means "leg go"? "Let go"? "Let go" *what?*

Well, some people have this *insane* idea that doesn't work at all: "Forgive and forget." Oh, yeah. How many of you can forget on command? I can't forget the things that I *want* to forget. I can't *remember* half of the things I need to remember. You can't forget! But you can let go. *Christ died* for those sins—*who am I* to think that I need to exact punishment, that I need to bring it up again and wallow around in the cesspool of all the ugly thoughts that I have because of that? (Rom. 12:19) Deal with your angry feelings.

Speak Truth. Be Angry—in the right way. Thirdly: Stop Stealing. Verse 28—"He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need."

Now, you might be thinking: "Okay! *Why is that here?* Isn't he writing to Christians?" I mean, how many of you are *thieves?* How many of you are *stealing?* Not probably in any *overt* kind of way. Well, this is another *application* of living by the principle of honesty and truth.

"Steals" is a translation of another Greek word that you know, that you didn't know that you knew. The Greek verb for "steal" is *kleptō*. That's where we get "kleptomaniac."

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You might be wondering: "Why would he say this to Christians, when he has already been emphasizing that you're the 'new man'?" Well, in the culture of Ephesus, stealing was not necessarily condemned. We live in a culture that has always had at least a pseudo-Christian sense of ethics. When I was a kid, we were taught at home and at school, and in every other part of society, that we were to respect the property of other people; and if someone lost something, we were taught to try to return it to its owner (cf. Ex. 23:4). But in a lot of places, stealing is just considered...well, it's part of *life*.

And I've read that there were even some elements in Corinth of a Robin Hood mentality: "If I take from the rich, I'm not really hurting them; and I can give to the poor, and I'm doing something good." Well, if you don't believe in absolute right and wrong, I can understand the logic of thinking that. But he's saying: You need to live by a standard of "the new man." It's not, "What can I get away with?" It's not, "What won't *really* hurt somebody?" It's, "What's right? What's wrong?"

I talked to a man many years ago. I was just getting started in ministry, and a guy came up to me after church one day and said, "I want to tell you what happened to me this week." He said his boss had promoted him. I said, "Congratulations. What's going on?" He said, "Well, I came into the back room"—or whatever this thing was where he worked—"and there was some cash sitting there in plain view in an envelope." I think it was about 1,200 dollars; and back in those days, that was worth...you know, 1,200 dollars—a long time ago! Nobody was around; and as a matter of fact, the way it was, he wasn't expected to be there; somebody else *was* expected to be there. So if he took the money, A—nobody would know he did; and, B—another guy would get blamed for it. Well, it turns out, his boss *arranged* that circumstance. And when my friend brought the money to his boss, his boss said, "Thank you. I've been thinking about promoting you. I thought that I could give you much greater responsibility within this company, but I just needed to make sure."

Now, I can't promise you earthly rewards like that. But I *can* promise you that God is *infinitely bigger* than that earthly boss. Oh, and by the way: He is omniscient, and He sees and He knows (Heb. 4:13). And He knows not only what you did or didn't do, He knows what you thought about it (Prov. 20:27). He knows what the temptation was. And He sent His Son to die to make you a "new creature" (cf. 1 Pet. 2:24).

This is one of those verses that we can read—"He who steals must steal no longer"—and we know that that applies to everybody we can think of. People should not steal. But it's *here*, and it's in His Word, and it *is* written to Christians. So, are you willing to let the searchlight of God's Word shine its light into *your* own heart? (Heb. 4:12) Might this actually apply to us, too? Do *you* ever steal?—like, oh, snatch something from your employer? (Titus 2:10) Did you ever rob your employer of time that he's paying you for, to be productive, and you're not being productive? (Prov. 18:9) What do you do when a cashier gives you too much change? How much effort do you put into finding the owner of a lost item? Are your ethics the same when no one of the human ilk is looking? (Ps. 101:2; Eph. 6:6)

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This passage presents an *alternative* to stealing; and I think this is ultimately the point here, that He would have us to emphasize. The alternative to stealing is, in our language, a four-letter word: work. He says, "But rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good..."

"Labor" is another Greek word translated that you might know just a little bit about; it's the word *kopiaō*. Have you ever heard "copious"? "Copious"—very detailed, very diligent, very thorough, very complete. It means "working with great effort; *growing weary* by working with great effort."

He says, "Instead of stealing—trying to see what you can get away with—work with your own hands, *laboring*..." "Work with your own hands" means to work for yourself (Prov. 14:23; 16:26; 31:13; Ecc. 3:13; 1 Thess. 4:11); it's not somebody else's responsibility to take care of you, it's *your* responsibility to take care of you (2 Thess. 3:10-12), or your responsibility to take care of your family (1 Tim. 5:4, 8).

I had somebody tell me one time that this means that God *especially* blesses *manual* labor, because he says "performing *with his own hands* what is good"; and he actually made the comment that, "You know, like that guy's a *banker*; he doesn't 'work with his own hands'! He just pushes buttons and pushes papers and signs things..." No, the point of emphasis is "his *own* hands"; *you* are responsible to "labor" in order to take care of you and those for whom you are responsible. Doing it is not a matter of whether it's physical labor; it's doing what is good, honest, productive work—that's what's "good."

"...so that he will have something to share with one who has need." Ah, now we're getting somewhere even further here! This is one of the reasons for working, as a Christian. One reason for gainful employment for Christians is to be able to "share" with those who have legitimate needs (e.g., Deut. 15:11; Prov. 22:9). God blesses us *so that* He can use us to be a blessing to others (1 Cor. 16:2). A very good reason why God multiplies some people's wealth is because they're really good at *sharing* it with other people, and they love doing it (2 Cor. 9:7; 1 Tim. 6:18).

I don't know about you, but every time I read something about Ukraine, it breaks my heart, and I pay attention to all the news I can find about what the Christians are doing about it; and every time, I read the article, and there is always that box that says "Click here to give now." That's part of why God has given us what we need—and even *more* than we need—so that we can share with someone who *has* a need (2 Cor. 8:14).

The standard is the same: hard work "with your own hands" to take care of you and those for whom you are responsible, *and* in order to be able to "share." Do you ever think of your job that way? God intends for it to be honest labor that benefits people, that you give your employer a solid 60 minutes for every hour you get paid, and He designs for you to be able to share with what He provides you. Now, it *might be* sending a lot to a place like Ukraine; it might be, maybe just taking care of a neighbor who has a need; it might be noticing that somebody in the Body of Christ has a need, and you just quietly take care of it. *That's* His design.

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He's teaching us how to "Walk In Truth"—and as I said, that's one, two, and three of seven commands, seven imperatives in this passage. We'll see more later; it's going to get very personal in Verses 29 through 32.

Let me close with some encouragement and exhortation. It's from one of the bright lights of the latter half of the 20th Century in American evangelicalism. There was a conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention in the late 20th Century, and one of the human leaders of that movement was Pastor Adrian Rogers. He spent the last 33 years of his ministry in Memphis, Tennessee. To be sure, Brother Rogers would be heartbroken at the *current* condition of the Southern Baptist Convention, to which he devoted so much of his ministry; he served as president for three terms there.

But I ran across this, and it reminded me—I can hear the voice echoing in my head; I heard him preach from this passage in Ephesians. Even though he's been dead now for about 15 years, his radio program airs right after mine. I've actually heard him a few times recently. He preached on Ephesians 4, and I heard him make several good application, and I thought I'd share them with you. Just as I could not do justice to Paul Twiss's beautiful British intonation of, "You can't just exhort the imperatives, you have to exult in the indicatives," I can't give the right southern twang to this.

But, be encouraged. What do you do with these things we're being told to do here? Well, you understand that, "Because I'm in Christ, this is how God wants me to walk." (cf. Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 7:1; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12; Heb. 12:28) Here's what Adrian Rogers said:

"It's better to be divided by the truth than to be united by error. It's better to speak truth which hurts, but then heals, than to speak falsehood which soothes, but then kills. It's better to be hated for telling the truth than to be loved for telling a lie. It's better to stand alone with the truth than to be with a multitude in a lie. It's better to succeed ultimately with the truth than to succeed temporarily with a lie."

And then, remember about how we belong to each other, "we are members of one another"? He tells this little story: "If I found myself in a church which does not uncompromisingly preach the truth, I would saturate that place with my absence." I like that! " 'But,' someone answers, 'all my roots are in that church! Grandma is even buried in the cemetery behind the church!' Well, I can promise you that with what Grandma knows now, she would get up and leave if she could."

The point is: We belong to each other! And *we are the people of the Truth!* Let's *live* that way, so we "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called."

Let's pray:

Father, thank You for Your truth. Thank You for calling us to Yourself through Your Son. Thank You for these exhortations that remind us, not that this is how we curry favor with You in hopes of one day being redeemed; this is how we, through our lives, proclaim that we belong to You, that we are redeemed.

Sermon Title: Walk In Truth

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Eph. 4:26-28 (Ephesians #30)

Date: 3-13-22

Father, please, deal with us in our hearts, by Your Spirit, that we might stop short of saying those things for which we need to apologize; that we might seek to "esteem others more important than ourselves"; that we would understand what it means to "never let the sun go down on our anger"; that we would learn to hate those things that You hate, love those things that You love, and to stand for them in the truth, always. Have Your way with us for those ends, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.