

### III

## *The Application of Redemption in Church Life*

(4:1-16)

---

Here begins the second major division of the epistle to the Ephesians. As previously indicated, this section is practical in nature, and in it Paul sets out the ethical implications of the doctrinal truth discussed in chapters 1-3. It is to be remembered that the division is one that is organizational only. In the mind of Paul doctrine and ethics go hand in hand. One is not to be separated from the other in such way as to leave the impression that one would be sufficient without the other. Through three chapters he has discussed the theme of redemption in Christ for all men. Now through three chapters he will show what this truth means when it is applied in the everyday life of man, whether in personal life or in group relationship.

The starting point is not with its application in personal life but rather with its application in group relationship. Here Paul takes up again the theme of the body which is made up of all believers. He shows something of the nature of this body and something of God's purpose for it. Christ is the head of this body. All who are his fill out the remain-

ing members of the body, and everything which they do is for the one purpose of building up the entire body. This is a beautiful concept. It is a favorite illustration on the part of Paul, one that he used in larger measure in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

*The Unity Which the Spirit Produces, 4:1-6*

Verse 1, *Therefore I exhort you, I the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling of which you have been called.* The word "therefore" is a resumptive particle. It is not likely to be understood in immediate relationship to the reference to the church in 3:21. It may be a reference to all that God has done for the Gentiles through the processes of grace and hence related to 3:6-19. Most likely, however, it is a particle which forms the bridge between chapters 1-3 and chapters 4-6. It relates all that Paul has said in the doctrinal section to all that he will say in this practical section. The verb "I exhort" was often used by the Greek people with a sense of admonition, "I admonish." More often it was used in the sense that it is here translated, "I exhort"; and quite often in the New Testament it comes to have a force of entreating and may be rendered "I entreat."

The object of the verb is the personal pronoun "you," which has reference to all the readers of this epistle. They are, for the most part, Gentile readers who have come to be a part of the people of God through the redemptive grace which God has extended to them. Again Paul reminds them, as he did in 3:13, that he suffers imprisonment because of his ministry in their interest. He is a prisoner in the Lord because of the ministry which he has extended in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles, but he considers it an exalted privilege. The use of the locative expression "in the Lord" rather than "of the Lord" suggests this idea. Paul does not

make the statement as an appeal to their sympathy. Rather, he makes it to encourage them to be loyal to the Lord along the lines which he is going to suggest to them. His loyalty to the Lord has resulted in imprisonment; they are to be encouraged by his example and are to be loyal to the Lord whatever it may cost them.

This loyalty which he has in mind for them is introduced by the expression "to walk worthily of the calling of which you have been called." This is the same term "to walk about" which Paul used in chapter 2. Once they walked about in trespasses and sin while it was the purpose of God that they should walk about in good works. Now he encourages them to walk about in a manner worthy of the calling which they have experienced. This, too, is a very meaningful idea to Paul and is expressed in other places in his writings (Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12; Phil. 1:27). The calling which they have experienced is a call to come forth from the kind of life which they have known in their paganism and to live the kind of life which is worthy of the new religion which they have professed. In the Bible "to walk" means to live a certain kind of life. To walk in light is to live the good life; to walk in darkness is to live the bad life. To walk worthily of their calling means to live a life that will be worthy of the profession which they have made that Christ is their Lord, with the natural corollary that this makes all of them brothers in Christ, members of one spiritual family, parts of one spiritual body.

Verse 2, *with all lowliness of mind and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love.* These are very specific terms qualifying the general idea in the previous expression "to walk worthily." The life that is lived in a manner worthy of the name "Christian" is one that is characterized by lowliness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, and

forbearance in the broad, general area of love. It is interesting to observe that the word which is translated "lowliness of mind" was not used by the Greek people to describe a desirable characteristic at all. In the Greek literature outside of the New Testament a person who was marked by this characteristic—lowliness of mind or humility—would be looked upon as a weakling. It is not so in the Christian religion. The one who has come to know Christ and to experience the unmerited favor bestowed by God through Christ is marked by lowliness of mind rather than high-mindedness. This was another of the words which the Christians made to be a different word in their vocabulary, one with an exalted meaning.

In similar fashion, the term which is translated "meekness" must be understood in the light of its use by the Greek people rather than by the connotation which men put into it today. Just as lowliness of mind was not thought of as a desirable characteristic in Paul's day, so meekness is not generally considered a desirable characteristic in the twentieth century. The problem is one of English usage, by which meekness today does not at all mean what Paul's word meant. Meekness today is used to describe a spineless sort of person who may be pushed about by anyone a bit more aggressive. The word which Paul used, however, was a very strong and positive word. It had been used to describe a wild horse that had been tamed. The horse still had all of its old power and fire and determination, but these were yielded to the controlling hand of his master who held the reins. He was a "meek" horse. Meekness then meant surrendered power, obedient power. As Paul exhorted his readers to be meek, he exhorted them to yield to the controlling hand of their new Lord all the fire and power and determination that were in them. These are desirable qualities when they are dedicated qualities.

The word translated "long-suffering" means to bear long with the infirmities or the weaknesses of another. In general usage it described one who would bear long without striking back in revenge of personal injury or wrong. Such persons follow the character of God, who is spoken of as one who is long-suffering with men, that is, as one who bears long without striking out at men in vengeance. As the word is used in the New Testament it is closely related to the word "patience" and had a meaning which was more exalted than any which it had in non-Christian writings. The clause which follows, "forbearing one another in love," is for the purpose of explaining the word "long-suffering." In the all-encompassing area of Christian love the followers of Christ are to bear with one another in their weaknesses and in their difficulties as they try to live a life that is worthy of the calling which they have experienced.

Verse 3, *being speedy to keep the oneness which the Spirit produces in the bonds of peace.* This participle is variously translated "endeavoring," "eager," "giving diligence," etc. It is the Greek word from which we derive our English word "speed." It speaks of the burning eagerness or the blazing zeal by which one would carry out some proposed activity. Here that activity is the keeping of the unity or oneness which the Holy Spirit produces. The word translated "to keep" means to cherish or to guard carefully so as to keep or maintain. The present tense speaks of a continuous effort as well as of a present possession. Already they are in possession of this oneness, and they are to give diligent effort to maintaining the oneness. The word "Spirit" in the opinion of the best interpreters is a reference to the Holy Spirit. The Greek case is one which indicates that the Spirit is the active agent in producing the unity or the oneness. The Holy Spirit produces a state of unity among all true believers, and

it is the responsibility of the believers to give diligent effort to the maintaining of that unity. The word "bond" is descriptive of a chain, and the word "peace" is in apposition with it. The Holy Spirit, according to Paul's metaphor, uses peace as a chain to bind together all the redeemed people of God and make them one. This oneness is further described in verses 4-6 in a series of seven separate "ones." The mass impact of the series of "ones" is most impressive, and the individual consideration of the "ones" continues and enlarges that impression.

Verses 4-6, *(There is) one body and one Spirit, even as you have been called also in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all men, the one who is over all men and through all men and in all men.*

### *One Body*

This entire statement appears to be an affirmation rather than an exhortation. If this is the case, we must understand a verb with an impersonal subject as we have translated it, "There is one body," etc. This "one body" is made up of all the redeemed. Many interpreters speak of this body as the church. Other interpreters object to the use of the term "church" with reference to this body because of the fact that predominantly in the New Testament the term "church" has reference to a local congregation. It is true that predominantly in the New Testament the term "church" refers to a local congregation, but it is doubtful that one can be true to the spirit of Paul in this passage without thinking of this one body of the redeemed in terms of "church." In Ephesians 1:22-23 Paul has already said that the exalted Christ has been made head "above all things in the church, which is his body." The relative pronoun "which" refers to church

and is the qualitative relative, meaning the church *which is of such nature that* it is his body. Apparently Paul is enlarging the idea of church to include all the redeemed who make up the one body of which Christ is the head. It should be remembered that this idea of all the redeemed as one spiritual body with Christ as the head is never presented in the New Testament as an organized body. It is rather a metaphorical expression to describe a spiritual ideal. It is Paul's view that regardless of one's background culturally, racially, or otherwise, when he is redeemed he comes to be a part of the spiritual body of which Christ is the head.

#### *One Spirit*

The "one Spirit" which gives life to this one body is the Holy Spirit. Just as the human body has the animating spirit to give it life, so this one body has the animating Holy Spirit to give it life. He is the one who gives to it life and activity. He is the one who takes the twin chains of peace and love and uses them to bind together all the redeemed into one body. Very few interpreters have denied that this is a reference to the Holy Spirit. It is generally unquestioned that Paul is carrying forward his idea of the one body by seeing the one Holy Spirit as the energizing, life-giving, life-maintaining principle of this body.

#### *One Hope*

*Even as you have been called also in one hope of your calling.* There is one body, and there is one Spirit; in like fashion, there is one hope which characterizes this body. The one hope apparently means that all the redeemed hope for one and the same thing, that is, the ultimate consummation of all the redemptive purpose which God has promised them in Christ. They may have many desires and aspirations that

differ; they have this one aspiration, this one hope, in common. This hope has its origin and basis in the calling which has been extended to them, which has brought them out of a life of heathenism and into a life redemptively related to God in Christ. When they were called out of that paganism, there was one hope planted within them, and that one hope they have in common with all other believers. It is a hope which is related to God's favor for sinful men.

### *One Lord*

The "one Lord" named and obeyed by all those who make up this body is Christ himself. There is but one Lord. There can be but one Lord. The word which is used carries the idea of absolute lordship as it passes from one language to another. The Greek word *kurios* appears in the Latin as "Caesar," in the German as "Kaiser," and in the Russian as "Czar." These words bring automatically to the mind the concept which was latent in the Greek usage—one supreme Lord and Master. Jesus had taught the impossibility of man's being enslaved to two lords. There cannot be two lords; there can be only one Lord in the true sense of the word.

### *One Faith*

There is "one faith" by which men come into relationship to Christ as Lord. Faith means trust. The faith which brought the Jew to an acceptance of Christ as Lord was the faith which brought the Gentiles to an acceptance of Christ as Lord. The faith which brought both to an acceptance of Christ as Lord is the same faith which has brought men in every age to such acceptance. There is one way and one only by which man comes into vital, saving relationship to God in Christ, and that is by way of faith. That was Paul's

emphasis in Ephesians 2:1-10. It is his consistent emphasis at every point. There are not many "faiths" by which man comes to be related to Christ. There is but one faith, one trust by which that experience is realized.

### *One Baptism*

Just as there is one faith by which all individuals come into saving relationship to Christ, there is "one baptism" by which they make outward demonstration of that inner spiritual experience. Baptism as it was used in the New Testament was a symbolic rite which pictured death to an old life and resurrection to a new life. The inner experience of faith stood at the beginning of the inner reality of one's relationship to Christ. The external act of baptism stood at the beginning of the external demonstration of that which one had experienced. The baptism which these Christians had experienced was one in its purpose—that of picturing or interpreting publicly one's experience of death and resurrection in their saving relationship to Christ. Those who trusted Christ in that day accepted baptism as a means of indicating that experience, even when it was unpopular to do so, even when it meant that they would be cut off from family and from friends, and, in many instances, when it meant that they would suffer persecution and even death. The one faith which they had in Christ was so precious to them that they desired that all men know that experience, and baptism was their way of demonstrating it.

### *One God and Father of All*

Once again, simply, and without laboring to do so, Paul brings the Trinity into his discussion—one Lord, one Spirit, one God. There is one God, the God of Christian revelation, who is the Father of all those who have come to be a part of

the spiritual body of which his Son Christ is the head. The word "all" in this passage appears to have specific reference to all the redeemed. It is not the idea of the universal fatherhood of God in the sense sometimes used that if there is one God he must be the Father of all men. Rather, the emphasis here is on the fact that there is one God and he is the Father of all the redeemed. There is a specific reference at this point: all those who have experienced this new spiritual life in relationship to his Son and have come to be a part of the one body of which his Son is the head have this one God as their Father. Again, without regard to previous cultural or racial lines they have one Father. There is a tremendous and awe-inspiring significance to this statement "Father of all," just as there is in Jesus' expression when in the Model Prayer he taught his followers to say, "Our Father." If one prays in the spirit in which Jesus taught us to pray, and if one thinks in the pattern of the inspired apostle at this point, he recognizes the truth that there is one God and Father of all the redeemed and in that sense all the redeemed are brothers in Christ.

Paul follows this statement with three prepositional phrases which are difficult to interpret. They may be another example of the multiplying of phrases to create the impression of the greatness of the one God and Father of all, or they may have separate force and significance. If the latter is true, the most likely interpretation is this: This one God is "over all" in the sense of his transcendence or sovereignty; he is "through all" in the sense of his pervading presence or immanence; he is "in all" in the sense of his constant indwelling presence through the Holy Spirit given to all believers. One stands in reverent awe as he looks at this idea of oneness—one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Father. How very much there is

here to bind all believers together in the sense of oneness! At the same time one stands with head bowed in shameful confession of the failure of the Lord's people to carry out Paul's exhortation, "Be speedy to guard over carefully the oneness which the Spirit produces."

*The Diversity Which Christ Provides, 4:7-11*

Paul's concept of Christian relationship and service is always the concept of unity in diversity. This was true in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 12-14), in which he discussed many spiritual gifts for the benefit of the one body and the many members with their diversified functions within the one body. In this passage he carries out that same idea in more limited fashion.

Verse 7, *But to each one of us has been given the grace according to the measure of the free gift of Christ.* Here begins the idea of diversity. We are one body, but each member of that body is given a grace or a gift, a functional service to carry out. In the Corinthian passage Paul spoke of the different functions of the different members of the physical body (eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc.) as representing the idea of the different functions that must be carried out in the spiritual body of which Christ is the head. Not all members of the physical body of man perform the same function, and not all members of this spiritual body perform the same function. There are different functions given to individuals as a part of the sovereign bestowal of Christ. It is Paul's view that whatever gift one has he is to use to the utmost in his service to God.

In verse 8 Paul, in typical first-century Christian argument, finds a text in the Old Testament to demonstrate his point, *Having ascended unto the heights, he led captive captivity, he gave gifts to men.* This is a rather free use of

Psalm 68:18. It is one of many places in the New Testament where interpreters are inclined to become so involved in one part of the text quoted that they miss the main point which the writer had in mind. It must be recognized that from a textual viewpoint there are some problems involved in Paul's use. If one turns to read Psalm 68:18, he will find that Paul has not quoted the Psalm but has adapted it to his own use. The Hebrew of the text of the Psalm states, "Thou hast received gifts among men." Paul, however, quotes the passage, "He gave gifts to men." He changes the person from second to third, and he changes the verb from "receive" to "gave." He is not to be accused of erroneous quotation or of careless quotation. Certainly his quotation is deliberate because it is his reading of the passage as "he gave gifts," which carries out his idea at this point. He may have been following the custom of the Jewish teachers of his day to adapt a text from the Old Testament to illustrate a desired point. It is true, too, that there are versions of Psalm 68:18 (the Peshitta Syriac and the Chaldee Paraphrase) which have the reading "Thou didst give gifts to the children of men." The Hebrew verb which in Psalm 68:18 is translated "receive" is used several times in the Old Testament with the sense of bringing in order to give (Gen. 18:5; 27:13; 42:16; 48:9). It is also true that one of the Targums renders the passage "gave gifts to men." It appears clear that Paul is amply justified in using this reading of the Psalm to illustrate his idea of Christ's giving gifts to men. In Psalm 68 the conquering God (or the theocratic king, according to some interpretations) ascends his throne and receives men as captive gifts indicative of victory. In Ephesians 4 the conquering Christ ascends to heaven and distributes spiritual gifts to men for carrying out the work of his kingdom. It is a beautiful and forceful parallel.

In verses 9-10 Paul explains all that is involved in the expression "having ascended." When translated literally the passage is rather abrupt. The following is a literal translation and then a smoother paraphrase to indicate the meaning. *Moreover the "he ascended," what is it if not that he descended also into the lower parts of the earth? The one who descended, himself is the one who ascended also far above all the heavens, in order that he might fill the all things.* A bit more smoothly translated this will be the reading: *But this "he went up," what does it mean except that he also went down into the lower parts of the earth? The one who went down is the same one who went up also far above all the heavens, in order that he might fill all things.* Paul's explanation has given rise to a great variety of detailed and lengthy interpretations. The key to the problem appears to be in the term "the lower parts of the earth." There are three theories of interpretation which must be noted. For very comprehensive treatment of these theories the reader is referred to the rather technical discussions cited in the footnote below.<sup>1</sup>

What is meant by "the lower parts of the earth"? Some interpret the expression "the earth" to be in apposition with the term "the lower parts." This would mean that Christ descended from heaven to the lower parts of God's dominion, that is, the earth. This would have reference simply to the fact of his incarnation. He descended to the earth, and having finished his work, he ascended to heaven, and there

---

<sup>1</sup> S. D. F. Salmond, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* ("The Expositor's Greek Testament," Vol. III [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d.]), pp. 323-27; Lenski, *op. cit.*, pp. 517-25; Francis W. Beare, "The Epistle to the Ephesians," *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 10 (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), pp. 687-89; Bo Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits and Christian Baptism* (Kobenhavn: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1946), p. 233.

he dispenses gifts to be exercised by his workers on the earth.

Some understand the expression "the lower parts of the earth" to refer to the grave. They believe Paul to say that Jesus not only came down from heaven to the earth in his incarnation but that a part of the experience included his descending into the inside of the earth itself, that is, the grave. From the grave he was lifted up in his resurrection and ascended to heaven and there distributes gifts to men.

Still others understand the expression "the lower parts of the earth" to be a reference to the place of the departed dead, particularly the wicked dead. They understand Paul to say that Christ descended from heaven to the earth. When he was put to death at the end of his life on earth, he descended farther to the region of the dead, there either to proclaim his lordship over the wicked dead or (by some other interpreters) to release from death all of the saints who had died prior to that time. By this interpretation Christ descended to the region of the dead and led back to heaven all the saints who had died prior to his own death, so that the New Testament doctrine of the resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ would speak of the resurrection of believers who die between the time of the resurrection of Christ and the Second Coming.

There is neither the inclination nor the space to go into all of these theories at this point. Volumes have been written on the theories, and if the reader is inclined to pursue the study further, helpful direction will be found in the works cited in the footnote. To this writer the second of the two theories appears to be the most natural, the most reasonable, and the one most in line with the remainder of the New Testament teachings. From this viewpoint it appears that Paul is saying that the ascension of Christ implied a previous descent. He descended from heaven to earth in the experi-

ence of his incarnation for the purpose of redeeming man, which experience included death, burial, and resurrection.<sup>2</sup> Having carried out that work in the earth, he ascended to heaven, and there as the sovereign Lord he dispenses functions and responsibilities to be carried out by the workers whom he has left here in the world. This he did in order that he might complete all things relative to the redemptive purpose of God.

In verse 11 Paul indicates something of the variety of the gifts or functions which Christ has bestowed upon men: *And he himself gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers.* Here is the diversity which Christ provides—a diversity of functional services in the spread of the good news of redemption for all men. Emphasis is placed upon the personal pronoun “he himself.” It is this very Lord Christ who descended from heaven, carried out the redemptive work of God in the earth, and ascended to heaven to distribute these gifts.

These are representative services. In 1 Corinthians 12 another catalog of gifts is set out. Neither is to be thought of as exhaustive; both are representative, and both have definite backgrounds in the life of the people to whom Paul was writing. The apostles were those particularly sent with a message of redemption. The prophets were those who were spokesmen for God, giving evidence of speech under the direct movement of the Spirit. The evangelists were the ones whose responsibility it was to proclaim the good news of redemption. The last two words are so grouped grammatically that they appear to refer to one office rather than two—pastors and teachers. The word “pastor” was one which indicated the leadership of a group as a shepherd leads a flock;

<sup>2</sup> Compare this with the similar idea of humiliation and exaltation in Philippians 2:6-11.

and the word "teacher" was a word used for the one who instructed, particularly in doctrines. One function is then to be observed under the title "pastor and teacher." He is the leader of the flock, and he gives to them doctrinal instructions.

Apparently in the New Testament churches there were different persons for these many different functions. Just how sharply the line was drawn we cannot know definitely. We can know that in his sovereign wisdom Christ gave to men the responsibility and the ability to carry out his work, whether they served as apostles, prophets, evangelists, or pastors. In epistles of a later date (1 Tim.; Titus) other officers and services in the Christian group are recognized. The work of God has never been static. As new servants and services were needed, God led the people in the establishing of these offices and these functions. This diversity of service comes from the One who is himself the head of the body.

*The Maturity Which Results from Both, 4:12-16*

There is one body made up of many members. To these members Christ has distributed functional gifts that differ according to the needs of the work of God and perhaps, too, according to the nature of those who serve. Some have natural endowment or equipment for one kind of service and some for another. The diversity of function has, however, a unified end, and that is clearly and forcefully set out in verses 12-16.

Verse 12, *facing the equipment of the saints with reference to a work of ministry, looking to the building up of the body of Christ.* This indicates that all of these functional services point to one purpose, and that is the complete equipment of the saints for the work of Christ's service. In order that they shall be completely equipped for carrying out the serv-

ice which he desired, they are given this distribution of functional services. All of these services in turn look to one end, and that is the building up of the body of Christ. They are not services that are to be performed with a view to honor involved or to self-interest enjoyed. They are rather services which are to be employed for the one constructive purpose of building or increasing, making to grow the body of Christ.

Verse 13, *until all of us attain unto the oneness of faith and full knowledge of the Son of God, unto a mature man, unto a measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* This giving of gifts in order that God's people will be completely equipped for the work of building up the body of Christ looks to the ultimate goal of spiritual development on the part of all, both individually and as a group. It is pointed to the goal of Christian attainment of such a oneness where faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God are concerned that they will be like a mature man or a full-grown man. The word which is commonly translated "perfect" does not mean simply sinless. It has to do with the idea of completeness or maturity. One grows until he attains the desired end for his growth. It is a word based on the same stem as the word which is translated "end." The end purpose of all the work of these many servants in this one body is the purpose of bringing the Lord's people as individuals or as a group unto the desired end of maturity or full growth.

That maturity or full growth is recognized in the closing phrase of verse 13, "unto a measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The goal for Christian growth as an individual or as a group venture is the approximation of the fulness of the stature of Jesus Christ. When one measures his growth or spiritual attainment by any other standard, he is using a standard that is too low. There is but one standard for the measurement of spiritual development as far as the New

Testament is concerned, and that is the fulness of the stature of Christ Jesus himself. If one would know the true nature of his spiritual growth or attainment, let him stretch himself up beside the fulness of the stature of Christ Jesus and look to see how much he lacks of approximating that stature. Until he attains to that desired end, that desired maturity, there is still something out ahead to beckon and to challenge to further growth. This further growth is to be realized in relationship to all of these services performed by the people of God.

Verses 14–16 form a long clause which is expressive of purpose both from the negative and the positive viewpoint. This purpose is related to the idea of Christian maturity to the point of approximating the fulness of the stature of Christ. It is the goal for all believers, as will be seen in the subject of the verb in verse 13, "Until we, all of us, attain." Verse 14, *in order that no longer we may be babies, cloud-tossed and driven about by every doctrinal wind in the deceit of men, in craft facing the cunning of error*. The purpose of all these functional services is to bring the people of God to maturity so that they will no longer be as babies spiritually immature, persons who are tossed about like the clouds by every doctrinal wind that blows. As the clouds are tossed about by turbulent winds and blown one direction and then another by the wind, so some Christians as immature babies are driven helplessly before every doctrinal wind that blows. If the doctrinal wind blows in this direction, they are sent tumbling along ahead of it; if the doctrinal wind changes and blows in another direction, they in turn are sent tumbling along in that changed direction. This is an indication of spiritual immaturity and speaks of an absence of stability which ought to be a mark of one who has come to maturity in his Christian life.

but not mentally. The ideal is that one shall grow in every way that is normal for growth in human experience. So is it sad to see one who has grown normally from every physical standard but spiritually he is as immature as a baby. Christ gives all of these services looking to Christian growth at every point in relationship to him.

Again Paul comes to a central emphasis upon Christ as the head of the body. He is the head, and all the body stems from that head. The relative pronoun "whom" is in the ablative case, which speaks of source or origin. Out of Christ as the head stems all the body, and all this body, fitted together and joined together as is natural for a body, grows until it attains to the desired maturity. It is not the purpose of God that the body of which his Son Christ is the head shall be dwarfed. Rather, it is to be full grown. It is not the purpose of God that the body of which his Son Christ is the head shall be improperly fitted together. Building terms and musical terms are used together in verse 16. The term translated "joining together" is the basis for our English word "harmony." The term translated "fitted together" was used of a house or the parts of a musical score. The word which is translated "supply" was a musical term descriptive of the one who dispensed to the members of the Greek orchestra the sheet music and the other equipment which they would use. Each separate part of the body supplies that which is its natural purpose to supply, with the result that the body properly fitted and properly joined together grows as a normal body should grow. It is interesting that Paul speaks of this body as causing its own increase or making its own growth unto a building up of itself. It is the purpose of God that the body of Christ shall grow in every way that is fitting for such a spiritual body to grow, until it comes to full maturity and all of its life is exercised in the area of love.

## IV

### *The Application of Redemption in Personal Life*

(4:17 to 5:21)

---

One of the distinguishing features of the Christian religion is the way of personal life set out for those who are Christians. Nothing is more basic than this. Redemption in Christ means deliverance from the penalty and power of sin. While it means deliverance from the penalty of sin for the future in the sense of the individual's being saved for heaven and eternal fellowship for God, it also means deliverance from the controlling power of sin in this world, salvation to a new and victorious life here and now. If the religious experience with Christ professed by the individual does not correct the evil that was once in his life, either there is something wrong with the profession that the individual makes or there is something wrong with his own application of life and purpose to that profession. Throughout the New Testament the assurance is given over and over that the indwelling Christ has the power to change the complete life of the individual and make of him a new creation. It is necessary then to observe the significance of the application of redemption in the life of one who professes to have experienced it.

*A New Philosophy of Life, 4:17-24*

The redeemed person is to live a new life in the Spirit. The evil in the life of the Gentile world, the pagan world of Paul's day, was due to a false conception of the meaning of life. They thought life was just for the purpose of revelry in the indulgence of the appetites of the flesh. Paul's view is that the true conception of life is that lives are transformed by contact with Jesus Christ and, therefore, an entirely new product is seen—a new creation brought about by God through the renewing power of his grace.

*The Gentile Philosophy of Life, 4:17-19*

The dark picture of the Gentile way of life based on the Gentile philosophy of life is painted in verses 17-19. Paul begins the instruction with the statement that this way of life is not for the Christian, in verses 17-18, *Therefore, this I say and bear witness in the Lord, that you no longer walk about as the Gentiles walk about in the emptiness of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, being alienated from the life of God, on account of the ignorance which is in them, on account of the hardness of their heart.* In strong and impressive language Paul calls the Lord to be his authority as he bears witness to these Christians that they are no longer to walk about as once they walked about and as the Gentile world at large still walks about in the emptiness of their mind. There was a time when these Christians had been a part of that Gentile world and had shared the view of that world that life consisted of pleasure and the indulgence of the physical appetites. The present tense of the verbs used speaks of the fact that what was once a continuous conduct is no longer to be their conduct.

The expression "in the emptiness of their mind" is an im-

pressive descriptive term which shows the reason for that Gentile conduct. The word translated "emptiness" means exactly that—the absence of any real content. The very thinking process of the Gentile world spoke of emptiness and nothingness as far as genuine values were concerned. This emptiness of mind is further described in verse 18. These Gentiles were darkened in their understanding and alienated from the transcendent life which is possible only for those who know the true God. They were darkened in their understanding and alienated from that life on account of the ignorance which was in them. This ignorance relates again to the emptiness of their thinking which led them to believe that life consisted of the indulgence of things material.

The expression "on account of the hardness of their heart" is variously interpreted. Some interpreters understand it to be related directly to the preceding expression "on account of the ignorance which is in them." If this is the correct interpretation, it means that the very ignorance in the mind of the Gentile was there because of the hardness of his heart. Other interpreters understand the expression to relate directly to the preceding participles, "being darkened" and "being alienated." If this is true, the phrase is merely an extension of the same idea, "they were darkened in their understanding on account of the ignorance which was in them, which ignorance consisted of the hardness of their heart." This latter view seems a bit more natural when one considers verse 19 and its relationship to that which has gone before.

Verse 19, *who are of such nature that being insensitive they have given themselves over to lasciviousness unto the working of all uncleanness in greediness.* The relative pronoun in this verse is qualitative and is always descriptive of character. These Gentiles, empty in their thinking, darkened

in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of ignorance of the true way of life, have in their insensitive spirits given themselves over completely to a life of lasciviousness and uncleanness, all of which is practiced in the area of greed. So greedy are they for physical pleasures that they have given themselves over completely to the expression of the physical appetites, and they look upon that as being the highest good which life has to offer.

Such philosophy of life naturally results in the tragic moral and social conditions which characterized the Greco-Roman world in Paul's day. These conditions are reflected in the literature of the people of that day, and they are reflected in the ruins of the cities which were standing in that day. The moral and social conditions were unbelievably vile. Archeologists today, in digging out the ruins of some of those buried cities of Paul's day, have found it necessary to put covers over the ruins as they were uncovered because that which is depicted in stone and other art work would corrupt the very workers who were digging. It is to be kept in mind that in Paul's day those buildings were a part of the everyday life and experience of the people, looked upon not only by adults but by school children themselves. One who grows up in an atmosphere of that kind, taking that as the accepted way of life, can be expected to do nothing more than follow the way the mind is bent. Once these Christians had been a part of that paganism.

*The Christian Philosophy of Life, 4:20-24*

In these verses Paul shows in strong contrast the different sort of life and conduct for the Christian because of the different approach to life or philosophy of life which is his. *But you have not thus learned Christ, since indeed you have heard him and you have been taught in him just as truth is*

*in Jesus, that you should put off according to your former way of life the old man who was corrupt according to the lusts of deceit, but to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new man, the one who has been created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the truth.* The pronoun subject "you" in verse 20 is emphatic. It is in contrast to the non-Christian Gentiles of verses 17-19. The strong adversative idea is that these who are Christians have learned a new philosophy of life, a new evaluation of and approach to life, as they have come to know Christ. The verb translated "learn" is the verb from which the word "disciple" is derived. They have come to know Christ in the role of disciples or learners. One of the vital things which they have learned is a new way of life and conduct. The conditional sentence in verse 21 does not raise a question; it affirms the fact that they have heard Christ and have been taught in him, just as truth is in him. This does not mean that they heard Christ himself. Rather, they heard Christ as he was preached to them by others who had come to know the truth in Christ. Jesus had referred to himself as the truth (John 14:6). He had said that he came into the world to bear witness concerning the truth (John 18:37). These Christians have been taught according to the truth that is in him and the truth which he brought into the world.

The content of that teaching concerning the true way of life in contrast to the false way of life of the Gentile world is given in verses 22-24. It consists of two things which are inseparable parts of one experience. First, they were to put off the former way of life which they had known before they came into contact with Christ and Christian truth. Second, they are to put on the new man, divinely created in righteousness and holiness which have their source in the truth. The illustration is a very graphic one. Missionaries from the

Orient report that it is a favorite illustration among the Oriental people because of the completely new way of life which they follow when they become Christians. Paul speaks of the experience as one in which they put from them the old man as one would put from himself a dirty robe. This old man was corrupt because of deceitful lusts which he had indulged. He had been deceived into believing that the proper approach to life was the indulgence of the physical desires or appetites. Such indulgence had been his "former way of life." Now that he has come to know Christ he has learned how erroneous was that former approach to life.

The same word that was used for "mind" in verse 17 is used for "mind" in verse 23. In verse 17 the Gentiles are pictured as walking about in the emptiness of their minds. In verse 23 the Christians are pictured as being renewed in (or by) the spirit of their mind. This speaks of a complete reversal in their way of thinking. Their way of thinking is new. Whereas once it dwelt upon emptiness, now it dwells upon those things which make for positive Christian living. The Christian life is one which is negative in that something is put out of the life or put off, but it is also positive in that something new replaces the old. So in verse 24 Paul says that a part of the lesson which these Christians have learned is the putting on of the new man who has been created according to God in righteousness and holiness which have their source in the truth. As one puts off an old soiled robe and puts on a new clean one, so the Christian in his experience turns from an old way of life, that of fleshly indulgence, to a new way of life, that in Christ.

The adjective translated "new" means new in kind. The life of the Christian is a new kind of life. The kind of life of the non-Christian Gentile was one molded by the emptiness of his thinking as he dwelt upon things physical. The kind

of life of the Christian is new and different. It is one which is molded by the eternal God as he makes a new creation—a creation characterized by righteousness and holiness. It is an axiom of conduct that one's life depends upon his point of view. That axiom is nowhere better demonstrated than here. The Christian of the first century was indeed a new creation, and this new creation resulted from the redeeming and transforming experience which he had with Christ. This redeeming and transforming experience gave to him a new viewpoint, a new philosophy.

*A Detailed Application of This Principle, 4:25-32*

Verses 17-24 set out a fundamental principle of right living. Verses 25-32 set out a detailed application of this fundamental principle. While the former paragraph was general in nature, this one is specific in nature and follows the same approach by pointing up contrast between the old way of life and the new way of life. One is reminded of the teaching approach of Jesus in which he dwelt upon the negative only for the purpose of clearing the way for setting out positive truth and lines of positive conduct. Paul uses this technique most effectively at this point. He shows the error of the non-Christian way of life by speaking in negative terms to indicate that the Christian is to have no part in such conduct. Then in positive terms he presents that which is to be the conduct of the Christian, so that life for the Christian is not that of a vacuum from which all evil has been removed and there the process has stopped. Life for the Christian is something from which the evil has been removed, but the emptied space has been filled up by good, which not only fills up the space but overflows in blessing to others. This negative and positive approach to the Christian life is set out along five specific lines as follows.

*Honesty Instead of Dishonesty, 4:25*

This principle of conduct deals with basic honesty or integrity in one's relationship to his fellow man. The Jewish Christians had a background for this concept from their own religion and its injunction against bearing false witness. The Gentiles may have had some background for the concept of honesty. The life which they lived, however, indicates that if they had such a background it was very meager and of little influence. Paul holds up honesty as a basic element in Christian living. Verse 25, *Wherefore, having put off the lie, make a habit of speaking truth each one with his neighbor, because we are members of one another.* The negative statement is to the effect that lying is to be put aside once and for all. The tense of the verb speaks of a decisive, completed act, "having put off lying." On the other hand, the positive imperative is in the present tense, which has to do with continuous or habitual action, and so is rendered "make a habit of speaking truth." The dominating principle in the life of the individual is to be truth—honesty—in contrast with the dishonesty which once marked his life. This is to be true of every Christian.

The idea is presented in the use of the word "each." Each individual Christian is to make a positive habit of speaking the truth with his neighbor. The reason for this is observed in the causal clause which follows, "because we are members of one another." Apparently Paul is speaking here particularly of Christian relationship, and he goes back to his idea that we are all members of one body of which Christ is the head. Since we are all members of one body, we are to deal honestly one with the other. To exaggerate the figure a bit, one cannot conceive of the hand dealing falsely with the foot or the eye dealing falsely with the ear. So in the

body of Christ each member is to deal honestly with his fellow member. This does not leave out honesty in relationship to those who are not a part of the body of Christ. It rather begins honesty at the proper starting point. Absolute honesty in all our relationship to those with whom we have most contact is just the starting point for honesty with all men as well.

*Controlled Temper Instead of Excessive Wrath, 4:26-27*

Another area where positive effort is to be employed to secure right living on the part of the Christian is the area of the control of one's temper. While it may not be easy to understand all that is involved in a part of Paul's instructions at this point, it is easy to understand the imperative which would indicate the avoidance of excessive wrath. Verses 26-27, *Be angry, and stop sinning; do not let the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil.* Just exactly what does Paul mean when he says, "Be angry and sin not"? Perhaps some help is found in looking at the meaning of the word translated "be angry." It is a word which speaks of the revolt of mind against that which is unjust, shameful, or sinful. It is a word which speaks of fixed displeasure against that which is evil. The word is sometimes used of God's reaction, that is, his wrath, against what is evil. If this is the significance of the word, it is easy to see that there is a place for such attitude or emotion in the life of the Christian. The Christian is to have toward that which is evil the same fixed displeasure or revolt of mind which characterizes the Father God.

What then is meant by Paul's joining to this imperative another in striking negative fashion—"be angry and sin not"? The entire expression might be translated "be angry habitually and stop sinning." Perhaps this is Paul's warning that

there is a certain danger involved in a person's exercising the attitude of wrath toward that which is evil, in the sense that this wrath may become resentment or exasperation to the point of sin itself. We speak often of righteous indignation. While we recognize that there is a proper place for such righteous indignation, we must recognize, too, that the Christian is never to let such attitude get out of hand. If such attitude comes to the expression of wrath, as it might be thought of in sudden flights of temper, it must be corrected at once. The Christian is not to sin by permitting even the correct attitude toward evil to become evil in its expression. Perhaps we do no violence to the thought of Paul if we paraphrase his expression to read, "Get hot, but cool off!"

The idea of bringing an end to the expression of wrath is further carried out in verses 26 and 27 when Paul indicates that the Christian is to let the anger of the day close with that day, that is, "stop letting the sun go down upon your wrath." In this expression the word "wrath" is a compound form. It is the basic word for wrath with a prepositional prefix, which makes it mean excessive wrath or a burst of wrath. If during the day the Christian has been guilty of such conduct, he is not to carry that experience on into the hours of darkness that are ahead. Perhaps Paul is thinking in terms of the Jewish view that the day ended with sundown and a new day started. The Christian is not to carry into a new day the exasperation which he has experienced today. Each day is to be sufficient within itself where such experience is concerned. Continuing this negative command, Paul says, "Stop giving place to the devil." Apparently he means that the Christian by excessive burst of anger gives to Satan a place in his life where Satan may find standing room to continue the evil in the heart of the individual. Never is the Christian to give Satan a working place in his life or a place

where Satan may get a wrestling hold to bring the Christian to defeat.

*Working and Giving Instead of Stealing, 4:28*

Each of the detailed principles of conduct seems to be a bit more striking than the one which preceded it. Here Paul turns to one of the most beautiful concepts of Christian living, that is, that the proper approach to Christian living is not "What can I get?" but "What can I share?" Verse 28, *The one who steals let him steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his own hands that which is good, in order that he may have something to share with the one who has need.* The Christian today may be a bit shocked when he reads Paul's instructions to Christian people, telling them to stop lying, to stop stealing, to stop many lines of conduct that are definitely not Christian. It must be remembered, however, that these were Christians who were just coming out of a life of paganism in which many of the things condemned from a Christian viewpoint were entirely acceptable. It must be remembered, too, that even after nearly two thousand years of Christian history it is still necessary for Christian ministers to proclaim from the pulpit to Christian people that honesty, integrity, and morality are Christian virtues and their opposites are to be left out of the Christian life.

In verse 28 Paul points to one who in the past had lived by the approach "What can I get from others?" To such extent had this been his practice of life that he had engaged in stealing the possessions of others. Now Paul indicates that such person is a Christian and is to stop taking the property of others. Here again he is not merely to stop stealing, thus putting out a negative and leaving a vacuum. Rather, he is to labor, working with his own hands at some honest trade,

and this will have a good result along two lines. He will be supporting himself, and at the same time he will be making something which he can share with the one who is in need. This is the Christian approach to life—not taking from others that which belongs to them, but giving to others who are at the point of need. One is reminded of the viewpoint of Mrs. Wiggs of the cabbage patch on the occasion of the birthday party which her neighbors gave in her honor. Her first thought was that of sharing the refreshments with unfortunate neighbors who could not attend, because, as she expressed it, she never felt that anything which she had was really hers until she had shared it with someone else. So the Christians of Paul's day are encouraged in a positive outlook on life which will lead them to honest labor for the purpose of helping a needy neighbor.

Maintaining honest and gainful occupation meant much to Paul. He himself had engaged in his trade of tentmaking to provide his living expenses during a part of his missionary journeys. He had urged the Christians at Thessalonica (2 Thess. 3:10) to be busily employed in gainful occupation, even to the point of refusing to support people who would not work. In his letter to Titus (3:14) on the island of Crete he gave instructions that Christians were to maintain honest occupation. Hard work is always commendable in Christian living. It is doubly commendable when a person engages in it with the idea not only of supplying his own needs but of being able also to share with others who are in need.

#### *Constructive Speech Instead of Destructive, 4:29*

Another characteristic of the Christian in his personal life is that of constructive and pure speech in contrast to destructive and impure speech. Verse 29, *Every rotten word out of your mouth stop letting it go, but if any (word) is*

good facing the building up of need, in order that it may give grace to those who hear. Once again there is the contrast of the negative and the positive. Negatively stated, the Christian is to stop letting any rotten word proceed from his mouth. The Christian's conversation is to be free of impurity and obscenity. There is an ancient proverb to the effect that the heart of man is a well and the mouth of man is a bucket and that which is in the well of the heart can be determined by what is in the bucket of the mouth. To one who has lived all his life with the conveniences of hot and cold running water that may not be a very meaningful proverb, but to one who spent the early years of his life in an environment where water had to be drawn up out of the well it is a most meaningful proverb. There were times when something came up in the bucket which was foreign material to the well! Then it was necessary to leave off the farm work while the well was cleaned out. So the proverb is most expressive—that which is in the heart of man can be determined even by the language which he uses. No foul word is to come forth from the mouth of the Christian, revealing the presence in his heart of that which is impure. The heart must be kept clean.

In beautiful contrast the positive side of Christian speech is indicated when Paul says that any word that is good for constructive purposes for building up at the point of need is to be spoken by the Christian in order that it may bring grace or blessing to those who hear him. There is no place in Christian speech for impure conversation. There is every place in Christian speech for pure conversation. Before a word is spoken or a story is told, let it pass the test "Is it constructive or destructive? Is it sound or rotten? pure or impure?" How often has the life of some immature Christian been cursed by the lingering memory of a rotten word or a

fool story that had been told. Let such never be told by the Christian.

*Unwillingness to Grieve the Holy Spirit, 4:30-32*

The Holy Spirit is presented in the New Testament as a person, the third person of the Trinity. He is presented as the Spirit of God dwelling within the believer. The body is spoken of as the temple in which the Holy Spirit lives here in the world (1 Cor. 6:19-20). As a person, he may be grieved when materials foreign to the life of a Christian are brought in. Perhaps the foregoing practices when brought into the life of the believer within whom the Spirit dwells cause grief to him—that is, lying, wrath, stealing, corrupt speech. Perhaps those practices which follow in verse 31 are the practices which bring grief to the Holy Spirit when they are brought into the life of the Christian. Again, it may be that it is a total picture that is presented here and that all the practices in this paragraph from verses 25-32 are practices which grieve the Holy Spirit.

Verse 30, *And stop grieving the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you have been sealed unto redemption day.* Here again is the present imperative with a negative particle to prohibit the continuance of action already in progress. Whatever the immediate reference, whether to the practices already discussed or those to be discussed in verse 31, they are practices which have been in the life of those who are now believers, and they are to be stopped. Their continuance will mean the continuance of grief to the indwelling Spirit in whom believers have been sealed, looking to the day of the redemption of the body in the resurrection. The body which is to be redeemed in the experience of the resurrection, the body which is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit here in this world, is not to be corrupted by these evil practices.

Verse 31, *All bitterness and anger and wrath and clamor and reviling, let it be put from you along with all malice.* These are practices which speak of the sins of the spirit or the sins of the disposition. Whereas corrupt speech, stealing, and lying may be expressions of the sins of the flesh, these (bitterness, excessive anger, clamor, reviling, and malice) are the sins of the disposition or of the spirit. They cause as much grief to the indwelling Spirit as do sins of the flesh. Perhaps Christians have not been as diligent as they should have been in pointing out the evils of the sins of the disposition. Often one is heard to speak or to preach denouncing the gross sins of drunkenness, immorality, stealing, murder, and such. Having denounced these sins, he may feel that he has shown real courage. That, however, is questionable. It is entirely possible that the greater percentage of his listeners are in agreement with him when he denounces these sins of the flesh. Let him, however, come to denounce the sins of the spirit—strife, bitterness, malice, injustice, prejudice—and he may find that the percentage is reversed and that more courage is required to denounce the sins of the disposition than to denounce the sins of the flesh. They go together, and both of them grieve the indwelling Spirit of God.

Verse 32, *but become with reference to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving each other just as God also in Christ has forgiven you.* Here Paul brings another contrast between the positive and the negative. Bitterness, malice, and such things are to be put away from the believer. Instead of being marked by such conduct, believers are to become kind in their relationship one to the other. The word which is translated "kind" means the exercise of thoughtful consideration. In the midst of all the life situations which might produce strife and bitterness Christians are to exercise thoughtful consideration one for the other.

forgive us than we have to forgive in one another that we cannot as his children refuse to exercise that same attitude of forgiveness. At the same time, appreciation of the love and forgiveness which God has shown us in Christ should cause us to turn from every type of evil conduct, such as that which Paul has described in this paragraph as having no place in the life of the Christian.

*Walk in Love, 5:1-5*

Verse 1, *Therefore become imitators of God, as beloved children.* Paul's favorite word for bridging two ideas or relating one idea to another is repeated here, "therefore." It goes back to the passage immediately preceding it—the idea of the Christian's exercise of forgiveness following the pattern of God's exercise of forgiveness. The Christian is in every way to imitate God. That is the word that is used, "become imitators of God," or, to transliterate the expression, "become mimics of God." Again a comparative phrase is added, "as beloved children." Just as children imitate the father whom they love, so Christians are to imitate the Father whom they love, that is, God. It is a trait of the conduct of children that they have a way of imitating the father that they love and admire. They want to be like him. This is a commendable quality for Christians. As they look to the Father God, they are to imitate him; they are to want to be like him.

Verse 2, *and keep on walking about in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave himself in behalf of us, an offering and sacrifice to God unto an odor of sweetness.* A part of this imitation of the divine conduct is to be that of walking about in love. Paul's favorite verb "walk about" is joined to another favorite concept, "love," and the two together describe the total of Christian conduct. Love is to be the all-comprehen-

