

***CTC Recapitulation Sermon hosted by***

**Works, Obedience and Faithfulness Properly Understood:  
What is God doing in History?**

29 July 2018

# Ephesians 4:25-29

“25Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27and give no opportunity to the devil. 28Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

# In Ephesians Itself . . .

What is the overarching flow of Paul’s argument in Ephesians?

## Ephesians 1:3-14: God’s Sovereign Grace, To His Glory

## Ephesians 1:15-22: Thanksgiving and Prayer for the Ephesians

## Ephesians 2:1-10: Saved by Grace, Raised up with Christ

1. While we were dead, God made us alive, has raised us up, and seated us in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus (2:1-6).
2. Why has he done this? (v. 7): “… so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”—*God raises us up, and seats us with Christ in order that He might continue to show/manifest immeasurable riches of his grace toward us in Christ Jesus.*

## Ephesians 2:11-22: One in Christ

In short: God is at work in history to build a house/temple. We are “being joined together,” we “grow,” we are “being built together.” I suspect we best understand language of using “edifying/building up” talk, of “giving grace to those who hear” kind of talk, when we see such talk as one means by which God transforms his people over time, means by which he builds his temple.

## Ephesians 3:1-13: The Mystery of the Gospel Revealed

1. A long-standing mystery has now been revealed in the incarnation and ministry and death/burial/resurrection of Jesus: Gentiles are now “fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (3:6)   
   *Notice: Jew and Gentile are members of the same body*.
2. A key part/goal of God’s mysterious plan: “that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (3:9)

## Ephesians 3:14-21: Prayer for Spiritual Strength

*Notice: This kind of language seems to be transformation kind of language: “strengthened,” “Christ dwelling” with us, “rooted and grounded,” “comprehending,” “knowing”; and especially: “filled with all the fullness of God”.*

*“filled with all the fullness of God” language probably keeps pointing us to temple/God dwelling with us kind of understanding.*

## Ephesians 4:1-16: Unity in the Body of Christ

*Now Paul moves to multiple imperative/commands, all flowing from 1:1-3:20: the various indicatives and summaries of what God has done for us.*

1. God has given various roles—apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers—and these persons help equip the people of God for the work of ministry (3:12), for *building up* the body of Christ (3:12)
2. This consists in

* Building up the body of Christ (4:12)
* Unity of the faith (4:13)
* Knowledge of the Son of God (4:13)
* Mature manhood (4:13)
* A certain kind of *fullness* of Christ (4:13)
* Growing up! (4:15) . . . .

*Notice: It is Christ who makes the body grow, but he makes the body grow so that the body builds itself up.   
  
Notice: We again see the affirmation of divine and human action. We also see the “building” imagery. God is at work in history to build a house/temple, which is his body, the bride of Christ.*

# Ephesians 4:17-32: The New Life in Christ

And now we come to our passage

1. V. 25: We are those who have “put away falsehood”.

2. V. 25: *Therefore*, we ought to speak a certain way. We are to “speak the truth with his neighbor.”

3. *Why*: At least in part, because “we are members one of another” (v. 25)  
*Note: We speak in a certain way not to merit, not to justify ourselves, etc. We speak truth because God has a grand plan in history—the building of a house/temple, and our words with one another is one of God’s means to bring about his plan of transforming a people, of building a house, which is his bride.*

4. The interesting command: “Be angry, but do not sin . . .” (v. 26)—perhaps a kind of holy anger or righteous anger?

5. The thief is to longer steal, but is to work so he has something to share (the negative a positive sense of a command) (v. 28).

Especially 4:29  
1. We are to let “no corrupting talk” come out of our mouths (4:29)  
2. Rather, we are to only use talk which is “good for building up”, as “fits the occasion” (4:29) ...   
3. ... And we use such talk “that it may give grace to shoe who hear” (4:29).

Now, if we are thinking in terms of a whole-Bible theology we can quickly and easily grasp the importance of verse 29 in relationship to the overarching structure of the Bible.

So, what *is* God doing in history? He is . . .

* Building a house/temple
* Forming a bride to be presented to the bridegroom

*And the command given about talk in Ephesians 4 are given—at least in part—to contribute to the big-picture of what God is doing in history: building a house/temple and preparing a bride to be presented to the bridegroom.*

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| **A Command** |  | **God’s Penultimate Ends** |  | **God’s Ultimate End** |
| Only use such language:   * + “such as is good for building up . . . “   + “as fits the occasion, . . . “   + “that it may give grace to those who hear” | (contributes to) | * Building a house * Preparing a bride | (contributes to) | The glory of God |

# Ephesians 5:1-21: Walk in Love

# Ephesians 5:22-33: Wives and Husbands

1. The sacrificial love of a husband for his wife, is to be modeled after the sacrificial love of Christ for the church—for Christ died for the Church in order to bring about the ultimate sanctification of His people, so that . . .   
  
*The bride of Christ might be presented back to Christ—the bridegroom—“without spot or wrinkle,” “holy and without blemish.”*

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| Christ dies for his bride . . . |  | Husbands are to love their wives (as reflection of Christ-Church relationship. The command to the husband flows from what Christ has already done). |  | Transformed bride (Church) presented to the bridegroom |

*Note: Husbands are to love their wives with a kind of sanctifying and sacrificial kind of love, but the husband’s love never replaces or renders unnecessary Christ’s sanctifying and sacrificial love manifested in the cross.*

*The husband’s sanctifying and sacrificial love flows from what Christ has done on the cross.*

# Ephesians 6:1-9: Children and Parents, Slaves and Masters

Fathers are to raise children in the “discipline” (*paideia*) and “instruction” (*nouthesia*) of the Lord (6:4)

* + *Main Point: The Father’s “paideia” and “nouthesia” are to a certain end: the raising and shaping and transforming of children, as these children are shaped and prepared to be a part of this “house/temple” which is God is building, to be a part of the “holy and without” blemish bride.*
  + *Ephesians 6:3 can be read in relationship to Ephesians 4:29: We use words with one another, including with our children, because we always see our words as a part of a process of “building up” and “giving grace” to those around us.*

# Ephesians 6:10-20: The Whole Armor of God

1. Christians are commanded to . . .

* “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might” (6:10)
* “Put on the whole armor of God . . . (6:11)
* We do this so, “we can stand against the schemes of the devil …” (6:11)

Let’s look at Ephesians 3:9 and Ephesians 6:1 side by side:

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| **Ephesians 3:9** | **Ephesians 6:12** |
| *So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the* ***rulers*** *and* ***authorities in the heavenly places.*** | *We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the* ***rulers****, against the* ***authorities****, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil* ***in the heavenly places*.** |

2. We might say that:

* *God is at work in building his Church, so that His own manifold wisdom might be made known to “rulers” and “authorities in the heavenly places”.*
* *This making known of the manifold wisdom of God entails, or is inextricably bound up with, or perhaps simply is spiritual warfare.*

# *Some Hopefully Helpful Conclusions*

1. God is at work in the world. His work in the world can be described using different, but overlapping, biblical imagery. God is
   * Forming/creating a “new man” . . .
   * Growing/building up the body of Christ
   * Building a house/temple
   * Rescuing and purifying a “holy” and “without blemish” bride
2. All of these pictures have *an ultimate end* in sight... All of these overlapping images point toward an ultimate end:
   * This “new man” is to attain “mature manhood”—indeed, “to the measure of the stature of the knowledge of the Son of God” (4:13).
   * The body is built up so that it might attain to “the unity of faith” (4:13).
   * We are to be a “holy Temple in the Lord” (2:22).
   * The church is the body, the bride, who is will be presented to the bridegroom in “splendor,” “without spot or wrinkle,” “holy and without blemish” (5:27).
3. It appears that a key “end” is that through the church “the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (3:10), and that the church accomplishes this through spiritual warfare. While the church *will* make know this “manifold wisdom”, it appears that this making known of manifold wisdom takes place through spiritual warfare, or simply is spiritual warfare.
4. Hence, returning to our initial passage (Ephesians 4:25-29), we see that the commands to “speak the truth” and to not use “corrupting talk,” and to use talk that “gives grace to those who hear” *can only properly be understood against the backdrop of the overarching biblical-theological framework taught in, or underlying the book of Ephesians.*
5. That is: your and my speech are used of by God to edify or build up the people of God—the Church. When we speak to each other in a certain kind of “edifying” and “giving grace to those who hear” kind of way, these appear to be means by which God is building, purifying, transforming his people over time. Our speech is still something being ruled by Christ, for it is Christ who makes the body grow, but Christ makes the body grow so that “builds itself up in love “(Ephesians 4:16).
6. We can even say that our everyday words to one another—“building up” and “giving grace to those who hear” kind of words, *are actually acts of spiritual warfare*. For, ...
   * It is in using “building up” and “giving grace to those who hear” language that Christians build up the church, and since . . .
   * it is through the church, that the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (3:10), and since . . .
   * these rulers and authorities are the same rulers and authorities spoken of in Ephesians 6:12—where spiritual warfare is explicitly described,
   * Therefore, “building up” and “giving grace to those who hear” language is a means to help the church become what it ought to be and one day will be … the mature “new man”, the temple in which God dwells, the bride presented to the bridegroom, the built-up body of Christ, the church—that body through which the various “rulers,” “authorities in the heavenly places,” “cosmic powers,” “the spiritual forces of evil” will be defeated.