



**MEMBERS OF ONE
ANOTHER IN CHRIST**



Four Bible Studies on Ephesians 4:25-32

In preparation for the 15th All-American Council

November 10-13, 2008

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Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away falsehood, let every one speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 4:26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 4:27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 4:28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need. 4:29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 4:31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, 4:32 and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (Revised Standard Version).

At the very first meeting of the Preconciliar Commission responsible for organizing the 15th All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America these words from Ephesians made an impression and seemed to be a “word” addressed to our OCA and the turmoil it has faced in recent years. We were looking for a way to address issues of truth and accountability, but in such a way that our bonds as members of the Body of Christ would be strengthened through the crisis and not torn apart. This brief passage brought these concerns together. “Members of One Another in Christ” (based on Ephesians 4:25) became the theme of the approaching Council but the whole passage is worth careful – and prayerful – consideration.

The four studies that follow can be adapted as needed for individual or parish use as time and interest permit. The first study is introductory and gives some background on Ephesians, why this particular passage was chosen and how it might help the OCA’s discussions about truth, reconciliation and healing as we address the crisis our Church has faced in recent years and as we plot a way forward. The remaining three studies each begins with brief notes on particular words in the text and gives a selection of related scriptural texts to read. Additional selections of patristic and liturgical texts are suggested in the studies and are provided at the end of each lesson. A few questions are given on occasion, but on the whole the texts are allowed to speak for themselves and lead to reflection on how these words might apply today in our own lives, in our parishes and dioceses, in the OCA, in preparation for the All-American Council and in our Christian life generally.

Suggested beginning and ending prayers are also included.

St John Chrysostom’s commentary on the passage is added as an appendix.

Before beginning these Bible Studies it is recommended that you take time to prayerfully read through the entire epistle to the Ephesians.

Suggested Prayers

Beginning Prayers

O heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who art everywhere and fillest all things, treasury of blessings and giver of life, come and abide in us and cleanse us from every impurity and save our souls, O Good One.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us (3x)

O Most Holy Trinity have mercy on us. O Lord, cleanse us from our sins. O Master, pardon our transgressions. O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. [For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.] Amen.

Prayer before reading Scripture

Illumine our hearts, O Master who loves mankind, with the pure light of Your divine knowledge. Open the eyes of our mind with the understanding of Your Gospel teaching. Implant in us the fear and love of Your blessed commandments, so that trampling down all carnal desires we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well-pleasing to You. For You are the illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and to You we give glory together with Your Father, who is from everlasting, and Your all holy, good and life creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Ending Prayers

Prayers for the increase of love and the eradication of anger

O Christ, you bound your disciples in a union of love and have bound us your believing servants to you with the same bond. Grant that we might sincerely and without hypocrisy do your commandments and love one another, through the prayers of the Mother of God, O you who alone love mankind.

Set our hearts on fire with love for you, O Christ our God, that in its flame we may love you with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul and with all our strength, and our neighbors as ourselves, so that, keeping your commandments, we may glorify you, the giver of all good gifts.

Prayer in Preparation for the Council

O Lord our God, look down upon all of us, and upon all who are preparing for the All-American Council. Grant us wisdom and understanding that we may learn Your holy will; warm our hearts with love for You and for our neighbors; guide us on the way of truth and righteousness; keep our hearts from all evil; unite us in one mind and in one heart, and let mutual brotherly love abide in our midst; bless us for the doing of good and useful things. Grant us peace and serenity, unity of spirit, concord and fruitful action, and all those things needful for our temporal and eternal life. For You are our God, powerful in mercy and gracious in strength, and to You are due all glory, honor and worship: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

To the Mother of God

O victorious leader of triumphant hosts, we your servants delivered from evil sing our grateful thanks to you, O Theotokos. As you possess invincible might set us free from every calamity So that we may sing, "Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!"

“Members of One Another in Christ”

Bible Study 1: Trouble in Ephesus

Ephesians, more than any other book of the New Testament, is focused on unity, not merely of the local body, but of the cosmos, with our Lord Jesus Christ as the unifier and reconciler of the universe.

For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (Eph 1: 9-10).

The Church is God’s chosen instrument, his ambassador to the world to make this message known and to demonstrate it through our own unity in Christ. For Paul, this meant first of all bringing together Jews and Gentiles, people who had lived radically separate lives. But this was just the beginning, because ultimately all human beings and all creation will find an eternal unity in God through Christ Jesus.

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (Eph 3:8-10).

The Church in thus meant to be a pilot project that shows the world what unity and reconciliation on God’s terms is meant to look like. Could there be a timelier scriptural reminder of our mission? But every generation of the Church has had to discover that the unity in Christ does not come cheap. Invariably it has only been through periods of crisis that the Christian community learned what is important to fight for, what to let go and how to be reconciled.

Before examining Eph 4:25-32 verse by verse we will first look at the background of this community, Paul’s relationship with it and some of the conflicts they weathered during and after Paul’s stay with them in the mid-first century AD.

About the Epistle to the Ephesians

In dealing with Ephesians most introductions to the New Testament focus on the disputed modern question of who wrote this letter. In fact, although the Church of the first centuries did have questions about the authorship of *some* books that eventually made it into the New Testament (Hebrews for example) no question was raised about Paul’s authorship until the 18th century in Enlightenment Europe. To this day there is no agreement among scholars, but while debates on this question may be interesting, they don’t add or take anything away from the content of the letter itself. Regardless of authorship Ephesians has been accepted by the collective wisdom of the Church because from the earliest generation to the present it continues to convey profound reflection on our experience of Christ in the Church.

Accepting Paul as the traditional author, Ephesians was most likely written while Paul was a prisoner in Rome (61-63 AD). The letter to the Colossians was written around the same time (Colossae was also in the Roman province of Asia) and has many similarities. But Ephesians may well have been a circular letter meant for a number of churches since some important ancient manuscripts don’t mention that it was sent to those “who are at Ephesus” (Eph 1:1). Nevertheless, we know that Paul was deeply connected to the Ephesian community since in no other church did he spend more time teaching and establishing it in the face of fierce opposition.

About Ephesus

Ephesus was the leading city of Roman Asia and a multicultural political and religious crossroads. In the first century it was home to a thriving Jewish community and it was famous for its Greco-Roman religious cults, especially surrounding the celebrated temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (Acts 19:23-41). A small Christian community had first been established in Ephesus before Paul arrived but it was missing key teaching on the Holy Spirit and baptism (Acts 18:24-19:7). Paul corrected this and remained there for more than two years in the early to mid 50's, building the mission and a close relationship with the elders (presbyters) in the face of much hostility (Acts 19:1-40). It was from here that he wrote 1 Corinthians. On one of his later journeys he asked the Ephesian elders to meet with him at the nearby port of Miletus, giving us a moving scene of the bond among the leaders (Acts 20:17-38). Paul left his young disciple Timothy as bishop in Ephesus and 1-2 Timothy reflect the conflicts and pastoral challenges Timothy faced there in the 60's.

Although less well documented, the Apostle John was also based in Ephesus late in his life and wrote his Gospel and Epistles from there in the 90's. Revelation was written while John was in exile not far away on the island of Patmos, sometime in the 80's or 90's, and the first of Revelation's "Letters to the Seven Churches" (Rev 2:1-3:22) is to Ephesus (Rev 2:1-7).

The Christian community in Ephesus had an illustrious reputation for steadfast faith by the time St Ignatius of Antioch wrote to them on his way to martyrdom in Rome (around 110 AD). But even then it was still struggling to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" as Paul had exhorted them years before (Eph 4:3).

Paul and the Ephesian Community

Read: Acts 18:24-19:7

Acts 19:1-40

Acts 20:17-38

Reflection: What troubles had the community been through at its founding and with Paul? How would you describe Paul's relationship with the Ephesian Elders? What troubles did Paul predict would occur after his departure?

2. Troubles After Paul's Departure

Read the following passages. From these readings, what picture do you get of the conflicts that troubled the Ephesian community after Paul's departure? What insights does this give you about church conflicts today?

1 Timothy 1:3-7, 18-20 (compare 1 Corinthians 5:1-5); 4:1-5; 6:3-21

2 Timothy 1:15-18; 2:11-19, 23-26

Revelation 2:1-7

Additional Reading: St. Ignatius of Antioch, "Epistle to the Ephesians," p. 6.

Bible Study 1

Additional Reading

Excerpts below from St Ignatius of Antioch, "The Epistle to the Ephesians," (from *Early Christian Writings: the Apostolic Fathers* (translated by Maxwell Staniforth), Harmondsworth/New York: Penguin, 1968, pp 76, 79, 80.)

4. It is proper for your conduct and your practice to correspond closely with the mind of the bishop. And this indeed your clergy are doing; your justly respected clergy, who are a credit to God, are attuned to their bishop like the strings of a harp, and the result is a hymn of praise to Jesus Christ from minds that are in unison, and affections that are in harmony. Pray then, come and join this choir, every one of you; let there be a whole symphony of minds in concert; take the tone all together from God, and sing aloud to the Father with one voice through Jesus Christ, so that he may hear you and know by your good works that you are indeed members of His Son's Body. A completely united front will help to keep you in constant communion with God.

7. Nevertheless, there are some people who persistently bandy the Name about with the grossest hypocrisy, besides behaving in a number of other ways that do no credit to God. You must keep away from these men as you would from a pack of savage animals; they are rabid curs who snap at people unawares, and you need to be on guard yourselves against their bites, because they are by no means easy to heal. There is only one Physician—

Very flesh, yet Spirit too;
Uncreated, and yet born;
God-and-Man in one agreed,
Very-Life-in-Death indeed,
Fruit of God and Mary's seed;
At once impassible and torn
By pain and suffering here below:
Jesus Christ, whom as our Lord we know.

13. Do your best, then, to meet more often to give thanks and glory to God. When you meet frequently, the powers of Satan are confounded, and in the face of your corporate faith his malfeasance crumbles. Nothing can better a state of peaceful accord, from which every trace of spiritual or earthly hostility has been banished.

15. Indeed, it is better to keep quiet and be, than to make fluent professions and not be. No doubt it is a fine thing to instruct others, but only if the speaker practices what he preaches. One such Teacher there is: He who *spake the word, and it was done* (Psalm 33:9); and what he achieved even by His silences was well worthy of the Father. A man who has truly mastered the utterances of Jesus will also be able to apprehend His silence, and thus reach full spiritual maturity, so that his own words have the force of actions and his silences the significance of speech. Nothing is hidden from the Lord; even our most secret thoughts are ever present to Him. Whatever we do, let it be done as though He Himself were dwelling within us, we being as it were his temples, and he within us as our God. For in fact, that is literally the case; and in proportion as we rightly love Him, so it will become clear in our eyes.

“Members of One Another in Christ”

Bible Study 2: Baptism, Truth, Members of One Another

Part 1: Baptism as the Basis of Behavior

Looking at what comes immediately before and after Eph 4:25-32 helps to put Paul’s message in context. He begins and ends with a “Therefore…” (4:25, 5:1), and these two “therefores” act like book-ends to give clues to the verses that come in between.

Beginning: what does Paul say earlier as the foundation for his argument in this passage?

Read 4:1-3 and 4:17-24. “Put off” and “Put on” are a favorite image that Paul uses: read Romans 13:11-14, Galatians 3:26-28, Colossians 3:5-17.

The same image is used in the sacrament of baptism, which begins with putting off the old man and expelling all that is evil and unclean before putting on the new life in Christ sealed with the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Paul speaks of baptism as dying with Christ to our old self and rising with Him to newness of life.

Read: Romans 6:1-11.

Additional Reading: *“From the prayers preceding Baptism,” p. 9.*

Ending: Read Eph 5:1-2. What does this say about the main point he wanted to make in Eph 4:25-32?

For Paul, the decision to follow Christ and be baptized, to put off old patterns of behavior, to imitate Christ is the foundation of everything else in decision-making and communal life as Christians (1 Cor 1:10-13, 2:1-5, 4:16, 11:1, Eph 5:1, 1 Thess 1:6; see Matthew 28:16-20).

Reflection: Does your baptism continue to shape your life? Your parish? Discussions about the OCA and church life? If not, how could this be done?

Part 2: Falsehood, Truth, Members of One Another

*Ephesians 4: Therefore, putting away falsehood, **let every one speak the truth with his neighbor**, for we are members one of another.*

4:25 (the bold text above quotes Zechariah 8:16)

Putting away (apothemenoi), as of old clothes, or laying down weapons

Falsehood (pseudos), unreal, imitation, a lie

Truth (alētheia), reality, as apposed to appearances

Falsehood

Leviticus 19:11

Proverbs 14:5, 19:5, 9, 22; 30:8

John 8:44

Acts 4:36-5:11

Colossians 3:9-10

1 John 2:4, 21-22

Speak the Truth

Psalms 15:1-3

Proverbs 12:17-19, 27:5-6

Zechariah 8:14-16

Matthew 5:37, 7:3-5

John 18:19-24

Acts 16:35-40

2 Corinthians 1:17-20, 4:1-2

Galatians 2:11-14, 3:1-5, 4:16

Ephesians 4:14-16

Additional Reading: "4:25a Everyone Speak the Truth," p. 9.

Members of one another

John 13:1-38, 17:1-26

Romans 12:1-8

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Eph 4:11-16, 5:21-32

Additional Reading: "4:25b Members of One Another," p. 10.

Reflection: Recall an occasion when someone didn't tell you the truth. How did it affect your relationship? Have there been times when someone did tell you the truth and you took it badly? Why? When you don't tell the truth how does that affect you? Were there times when you withheld the whole truth for the good of the other? Are there limits to speaking the truth to each other? What about confidentiality? Under what conditions? When does speaking the truth become gossip? How can trust be restored after it has been broken? What should be the standard of truth-telling in the Church?

Bible Study 2

Additional Reading

Part 1: Baptism as the Basis of Behavior

From the prayers preceding Baptism

Priest: Expel from him every evil and unclean spirit which hides and makes its lair in his heart (3X).

The spirit of deceit, the spirit of evil, the spirit of idolatry and of every covetousness; the spirit of falsehood and of every uncleanness which operates through the prompting of the devil. And make him a reason-endowed sheep in the holy flock of your Christ, and honourable member of your Church, a consecrated vessel, a child of the light and an heir of your Kingdom, that having lived in accordance with your commandments, and preserved inviolate the seal, and kept his garment undefiled, he may receive the blessedness of the saints in your Kingdom... *The priest then asks the following questions three times:*

Priest: Do you renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his angels, and all his service and all his pride? *Reply:* I do renounce him!

Priest: Have you renounced Satan? *Reply:* I have renounced him!

Priest: Breathe and spit up him!

Priest: Do you unite yourself to Christ? *Reply:* I do unite myself to Christ.

Priest: Have you united yourself to Christ? *Reply:* I have united myself to Christ.

Priest: Do you believe in Him? *Reply:* I believe in Him as King and God (*the candidate then recites the Creed*)...

Priest: O Master, Lord our God, call your servant_____ to your holy illumination, and grant unto her that great grace of your holy Baptism. Put off from him the old man, and renew him unto life everlasting; and fill him with the power of your Holy Spirit, in the unity of your Christ: that he may be no more a child of the body, but a child of your kingdom. Through the good will and grace of your Only-begotten Son, with whom you are blessed, together with your most holy, and good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Part 2: Falsehood, Truth, Members of One Another

A number of the teachers in the ancient church wrote commentaries on Ephesians. Extracts from these can be found in Mark J. Edwards (ed), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Vol VIII: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999. Some of these are given here and in the following studies.

4:25a Everyone Speak the Truth:

Ambrosiaster: Since we have been *created in truth and righteousness* and reborn in baptism, in order to remain in it we are instructed to put away lying altogether. Hold fast to the truth. Do not cheat your brother in any way. Being members of one body, support one another's causes in turn.

Augustine: It is written, *The mouth that lies destroys the soul [Wisdom 1:11]*...Therefore the apostle puts truth telling in the first place when he commands us to put off the *old nature*, under which name all sins are understood, saying, *therefore, putting off lying speak the truth*.

4:25 b Members of One Another:

Theodoret. It would be extremely perverse, since we belong intimately to one another, to say things that are not true. For this is not the way the body functions. The eyes, for example, when they see cliffs and steep caverns, instantly report them to the feet so that they may turn aside and protect the whole body from harm.

Holy Thursday Matins — Ode 5

The Apostles were united by a bond of love, dedicated to Christ, who rules over all. Their beautiful feet were washed for the preaching of the Gospel of peace to all.

The wisdom of God, who rules the ungovernable waters of the heavens, who tames the deeps and restrains the seas, now pours water into a basin, and the Master washes the feet of His servants.

The Master shows the disciples an example of humility; He who wraps the vault of heaven in clouds girds Himself with a towel; He who holds in His hands the breath of all that exists, kneels down to wash the feet of His servants.

Ikos: Let us all approach the mystical table in fear and receive the Bread with pure souls; and let us stay with the Master so that we may see how He washes His disciples' feet and wipes them with a towel. Let us do as we have seen Him do, submitting to one another and washing one another's feet, for Christ Himself thus commanded His disciples. But the servant and deceiver Judas did not take heed.

From the Liturgy of St Basil

And unite all of us to one another who become partakers of the one Bread and Cup in the communion of the Holy Spirit. Grant that none of us may partake of the holy Body and Blood of your Christ for judgment or condemnation. Instead may we find mercy and grace with all the saints who through the ages have been well-pleasing to You; ancestors, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, teachers, and every righteous spirit made perfect in faith. Especially with our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary.

“Members of One Another in Christ”

Bible Study 3: Conflict – Be angry but do not sin

Part 1: Anger and the Devil

4:26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 4:27 and give no opportunity to the devil.

4:26 (the bold text above quotes Psalm 4:4):

Be angry (orgizesthe), have angry or irritated feelings

Sin (amartanete), do wrong, miss the mark, fail in one’s purpose

Anger

Psalm 4

Mark 3:1-6, 11:15-17

Matthew 5:21-26, 43-48

James 1:19-20

Additional Reading: “4:26a Being Angry but Not Sinning”, p. 13.

Additional Reading: “4:26b Not Letting the Sun Go Down on One’s Anger,” p. 13.

4:27 and do not give opportunity to the devil – or: *do not make room for the devil*

Room (topos), place, occasion, opportunity

Devil (diabolos), slanderer, one who revels in malicious gossip

Do not make room for the devil

Spiritual warfare is a constant theme in Paul (as it is elsewhere in the Scriptures), who also uses the image of a battle between light and darkness. Jesus began his ministry by confronting the devil, whose aim was to distract Jesus from single-minded devotion to God.

Matthew 4:1-11 (see also Deuteronomy 8:1-10, the passage Jesus quotes)

Romans 13:11-14

Eph 5:3-14, 6:10-16

2 Corinthians 6:14-18, 10:1-6

1 Peter 5:8-11

Additional Reading: “4:27 Giving No Opportunity to the Devil,” p. 13.

Reflection: What makes you angry? How do you get over it?

Part 2: Repentance, service and conflict

Ephesians 4:28 *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need.*

Thief (o kleptōn), one who steals, takes something secretly without permission; connotations of cheating, lying, treachery, fraud

Labor (kopiātō), work to the point of weariness; strive, struggle

Honest (to agathon), work well, uprightly, usefully, of benefit to others

The first part of the verse is not just about stealing; it's more broadly about abandoning ones old selfish ways -- in other words, repentance.

Matthew 7:13-27

Acts 2:37-47

Luke 3:7-14

James 1:22-25

Additional Reading: "4:28a No Longer Stealing," pp. 13 & 14.

The second part of the verse is about embarking on a life of service directed towards the needs of others out of reverence for Christ.

Matthew 20:20-28, 22:34-40

John 13:1-35

Mark 12:28-34

Additional Reading: "4:28b Doing Honest Work;" "4:28c Giving to Those in Need," p. 14.

This radical love and service to one another was taken as a practical model for ordering community life in the first Christian community in Jerusalem.

Acts 2:43-47, 4:32-35

Reflection on conflict: The early Jerusalem ideal of shared community life didn't last long. First, one of the married couples (Ananias and Sapphira) introduced a note of deceit by conspiring to pretend that they were contributing all the proceeds from a land sale to the common fund (Acts 5:1-11). Then, what began as an act of communal charity (the collection for the poor widows) became a source of jealousy and conflict. The multicultural Christian community, mixing Jews from Palestine ("Hebrews") with Jews from elsewhere in the Greek-speaking world ("Hellenists"), faced this head-on under the leadership of the apostles.

Read Acts 6:1-7 and consider how the community dealt with the conflict. Hint: all the names of the elected helpers (traditionally the first deacons) are Greek.

Bible Study 3 Additional Reading

Part 1: Anger and the Devil

4:26a Being Angry but Not Sinning

John Chrysostom: Note Paul's persistent wisdom. He speaks first to prevent our sinning. We do not listen, but he does not abandon us. His role as a spiritual father does not allow him to give up on us easily. It is like the doctor who tells the sick person what he must do. If the patient refuses to hear him, he does not write him off. Rather, he continues to care for him by giving him further persuasive counsel. So too does Paul. He has already said, *Do not lie*. But suppose anger should arise from lying. He then deals with this. What does he say? *Be angry and do not sin*. It is better not to grow angry at all. But if one ever does fall into anger he should at least not be carried away by it toward something worse.

Jerome: This is taken from the fourth psalm [Psalm 4:4], as I am sure no one doubts. It may seem contrary to what is said of anger elsewhere, that we must put away all anger [Col 3:8]...It is an oversimplified interpretation that does harm, especially when people imagine that the constraints against anger are being here relaxed. It is not only among us but among philosophers too that anger is spoken of in a double sense. Anger emerges first when we are understandably aroused by a natural stimulus after being wounded by an injury. Or it arises when, after the impulse has abated and our rage has been restrained, the mind is capable of judgment but nonetheless we find ourselves desiring vengeance upon the one who is thought to have inflicted the wound. In this [verse] Paul is speaking of the first kind of anger. He is allowing to us as vulnerable humans that in the face of some undeserved event, we may be moved to some level of annoyance, as if a light breeze were disturbing the serenity of the mind. But on no account are we to be carried into swelling rapids by the impulse of rage.

4:26b Not Letting the Sun Go Down on One's Anger

John Chrysostom: Do you wish to have your fill of anger? One hour, or two or three is enough for you. But do not let the sun go down and leave you both as enemies. It was God's goodness that did not leave us in anger. He did not let us part in enmity. He shed his light upon those who were sinners. So when evening is coming on, be reconciled. Quell the evil impulses while they are fresh. For if night overtakes you, the next day will not be enough time to extinguish the further evil which has been increasing overnight.

4:27 Giving No Opportunity to the Devil

Marius Victorinus: The devil can do nothing to us unless we ourselves willingly allow him to do so. This is true in all our acts. Thus we are masters of our own will; otherwise we would deserve no good return for our good acts and no punishment for our bad acts. The devil's opportunity arises from our own vice.

Part 2: Repentance, service and conflict

4:28a No Longer Stealing

Marius Victorinus: Sin does not consist in simply committing sin but persisting in it. If so, there is always a place for repentance. There is a place for correction. So the apostle says: *let the one who has stolen not steal again*. This should be applied not only to stealing but also to all sin. Anyone who has sinned in any way is now called not to sin again.

Jerome: Those who live in the midst of this life's intense business appear to be forced, for the sake of food and necessary provisions, to buy and sell certain things and to seek unfair profit from business. It is difficult even for those who have been set free from the other passions—namely fornication, idolatry, adultery and murder—to escape being caught by this subtle vice.

4:28b Doing Honest Work

Theodoret: Idleness is a major source of sin. So it is reasonable for Paul to set honest work over against it. The text contrasts theft, which is an evil work, with honest labor, which is a good work.

4:28c Giving to Those in Need

Ambrosiaster: Paul exhorts them not to return to their past vices and sins. He wants them to behave as new persons. What good is it to be called new if our evil deeds prove us to be still gripped by our old nature? The Christian is commanded not merely to avoid stealing but more so to care actively for the poor through his own hard work. Hence by commitment to good works he may restore what he formerly stole. We are not to be praised for refusing to steal. What makes one praiseworthy is to give of one's own to the needy.

“Members of One Another in Christ”

Bible Study 4: Honor the Spirit -- Honor the New Life in Christ

Part 1: Grieving the Spirit, Sealed in the Spirit

Ephesians 4:29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear.

Evil (saprois), decayed, rotten, putrid, of decaying fish or rancid fruit; of ragged clothing to be thrown out; diseased; harmful

Edifying (*building up*) (oikodomēn), strengthening, constructing, edifying, as opposed to weakening, leading astray

Grace (charis), giving delight, pleasure, benefit or blessing; a cause for gratitude

Pernicious talk is a frequent theme in the scriptures:

Proverbs 4:24, 11:13, 14:3,23, 20:19, 24:2

2 Timothy 2:15-19

Ecclesiastes 10:12-15

Titus 1:10-16

Romans 16:17-20

James 3:1-18, 4:1-12

Ephesians 5:4

Additional Reading: “4:29a Not Speaking Evil”; “4:29b Edifying Words,” p. 18.

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Grieve (lypeite), cause pain, sadness

Sealed (esphragisthēte), secured by a seal [sphragis], a sign of identification and ownership or belonging; delivered safely

Redemption (apolitrōsis), set free, released, as in buying back of a slave or captive through payment of a ransom

Here is another reference to the seal of the Spirit received at baptism (see 2 Corinthians 1:21-22). This again is a reminder of how closely early Christians linked the new life given through the invisible mystery of baptism to the new visible behavior that was expected. What *grieves* the Spirit is any repudiation of the new life, the sign of which is sincere love among the brothers and sisters in Christ.

Additional Reading: “4:30a Not Grieving the Holy Spirit of God;” “4:30b Sealed for the Day of Redemption,” pp. 18-19.

Part 2: From bitterness to forgiveness and kindness

Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, 4:32 and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

In 4:30 Paul spoke of not grieving the Spirit. Here he becomes much more concrete about what practices will have to be set aside.

4:31 *Bitterness* (pikria), of plants that produce inedible or poisonous fruit; of people who become harmful to a community

Put away (arthēto), remove, take off

Wrath (thymos), rage, swelling up of anger, hot temper, angry outburst, fury

Anger (orgē), lingering resentment and bitterness

Wrangling (kraugē), shouting, loud cry, wailing, shrieking

Slander (blasphēmia), harmful, abusive speech against someone's reputation; reviling; evil speaking, especially against God

Malice (kakia), evil, depravity, vice, ill will, hatefulness

Additional Reading: "4:31a Putting Away Bitterness, Wrath, Anger, Clamor and Slander;" "4:31b With All Malice," p. 19.

4:32 *Be kind* (chrēstoi), useful, helpful, good, easy, pleasant, obliging, benevolent; well adapted to fulfill a purpose

Tenderhearted (eusplagknoi), having deep compassion (Lit. that comes from the bowels)

Forgiving (charizomenoi), giving freely, canceling a debt, showing favor, kindness

Additional Reading: "4:32 Kind, Tenderhearted, Forgiving," p. 19.

Reflection 1: In 2 Timothy 3:1-9, Paul gives a frightening description of human relations in "the last days", when tearing down is the norm, not building up.

Read the passage and consider how much of what he says 1) involves talk and 2) might fit today. Note: Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim 3:8) are the names from Jewish tradition of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses (Exodus 7:11). How do you distinguish a "hard saying" (some truth that needs to be spoken) from evil talk?

But the last day isn't here yet, and Paul urges his communities to remain steady and faithful, walking in the light and building each other up. Indeed, this is one of his favorite expressions (1 Cor 8:1, 10:23, 14:12, 2 Cor 13:10). Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28 for a picture of how Paul suggests Christians live in the time remaining until Christ's return.

Reflection 2: Practically, what's the best way you've learned to avoid bitterness (your own and others'), to forgive and build up instead?

In 4:30 and 4:31 Paul details what it is that grieves the Spirit of God. In 4:32 he speaks of what pleases the Spirit. Above all, God is pleased when his children remember the goodness, kindness and mercy they have received, and share the same, in turn, with their brothers and sisters: *be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you*. Paul is perpetually aware of the mercy he himself and everyone has received from the Lord, and this deeply colors all he says about the treatment of others.

Matthew 5:7, 6:7-15, 18:21-35

Luke 6:36-38

John 7:53-8:11

Rom 15:1-7

1 Corinthians 13

Eph 2:1-9, 5:10

1 Tim 1:12-17

James 2:12-13

1 John 1:6-10

Reflection 3: based on all that you have read and reflected upon in these studies, what are you prepared to do to build up the church and bring a message of reconciliation to the world?

Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

Bible Study 4

Additional Reading

Part 1: Grieving the Spirit, Sealed in the Spirit

4:29a Not Speaking Evil

Ambrosiaster: To the servant of God, all things appear to have some aspect of good. This does not stain his purity in any respect. What use is it to have a clean life and a foul mouth? The Lord says that everyone will be justified or condemned by his own words [Mt 12:37]. One who speaks ill cannot be thought to live well. Many vices are implied in speaking ill of another, whether this means talking basely or disparaging the good of another or telling deceitful tales or lies. All these are repugnant. But good and sober reports are gratifying to those who hear them. They set an example. God is glorified in such words, which build up faith in Christ.

4:29b Edifying Words

John Chrysostom: This means: 'whatever edifies your neighbor, say this and nothing more.'...Say only such as is good. The flood of words is vast. Paul is right to charge us to use language carefully. He gives us a pattern for doing this. Of what then are we to speak? Whatever edifies, he says. Why? So the one who hears may be grateful to you. Suppose your brother has committed fornication. Do not lord it over him. Do not gloat. That will not help your brother but damage him. It is as if you were driving a nail into him. If you counsel him, do so in a gracious manner. Show him how to keep his mouth clean. Teach him not to disparage anyone. Make his instruction your first concern. Then you will have rendered him a great service. And if you speak with him about abstinence, discretion and alms, all these things soothe his soul, and he will give great thanks to you.

4:30a Not Grieving the Holy Spirit of God

John Chrysostom: This is a particularly awful and fearful saying. It reminds us of what he said to the Thessalonians: *Whoever disregards this disregards not man but God [1 Thess 4:8]...*If you say an arrogant word, if you strike your brother, you have not merely hurt him but have grieved the Spirit. He contrasts such arrogance with the benevolence of God in order to sharpen the admonition.

4:30b Sealed for the Day of Redemption

Jerome: That we have been "sealed" with the Holy Spirit means that both our spirit and our soul are impressed with God's own seal, signifying that we belong to him. By this we receive in ourselves that image and likeness in which we were created at the outset...You are sealed so that you may be preserved to the end. You may show that seal on the day of redemption, pure and unblemished and not damaged in any part. You are thereby ready to be counted with those who are redeemed.

The Prayer of Holy Chrismation

Blessed are you, O Lord God Almighty, Source of all good things, Sun of righteousness, who shed forth upon them that were in darkness the light of salvation, through the revelation of your Only-begotten Son and our God; and who has given us, unworthy though we be, blessed purification through hallowed water, and divine sanctification through life-creating Chrismation; who now also has been graciously pleased to regenerate your servant that has newly received Illumination, by water and the Spirit, and grants him (her) remission of sins, whether voluntary or involuntary. As the same Master, compassionate King of kings, grant also to him (her) the seal [sphragis] of the gift of your holy, and almighty and adorable Spirit, and participation in the holy Body and precious Blood of your Christ. Keep him (her) in your sanctification; confirm him (her) in the Orthodox faith; deliver him (her) from the Evil One, and from all his workings. And preserve his (her) soul in purity and righteousness, through the saving fear of you; that he (she) may please you in every deed and word, and may be a child and heir of your heavenly kingdom. For you are

our God, the God who shows mercy and saves; and to you we ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The priest dips his finger (or a brush) into the Holy Chrism and anoints the newly baptized person, tracing the Sign of the Cross on the forehead, the eyes, the nostrils, the lips, on both ears, the breast, the hands and feet, and saying each time: The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Part 2: From bitterness to forgiveness and kindness

4:31a Putting Away Bitterness, Wrath, Anger, Clamor and Slander

Marius Victorinus: He adds five terms briefly at the end—*bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander*. Then at the very end he has added the summarizing phrase *with all malice*. Bitterness consists in envying and speaking ill of others and similar actions. Wrath consists in the lust for vengeance and punishment. Anger is the impulse of a mind boiling over and upheaving beyond what is reasonable. Clamor is a kind of insane, uncontrolled utterance. And blasphemy is wicked thought or speech that attacks God and is primarily directed against God.

John Chrysostom: All this bitterness is not merely to be cleansed but to be *put away* altogether. Why should anyone try to contain it nor hold it in? Why keep the beast of anger around so as to have to watch it constantly? It is possible to banish it, to expel it and drive it off to some mountain place.

4:31b With All Malice

Ambrosiaster: Some repress anger and clamor and yet still remain mischievous. Paul therefore adds that these should be entirely done away, along with all malice. Such mischief consists not only in blasphemy but in putting on a face of peace while holding on to discord within the soul.

4:32 Kind, Tenderhearted, Forgiving

John Chrysostom: *Patience* means practicing forgiveness. To give patience is a far greater gift than to give money. The one who gives money to one who asks of him does indeed do a fine and admirable deed, but such a gift touches only the body. Spiritual gifts touch the soul with redemption. Hence one who forgives does good both to his own soul and to that of the one who has received forgiveness.

John Chrysostom: Paul's words contain a great mystery. "For," he says in effect, "God took a chance in forgiving you. He placed his own Son in jeopardy. To forgive you he even sacrificed his Son. But you have received forgiveness time after time, at no risk or expense, yet you do not forgive."

Jerome: Paul wants us to be gentle, approachable people, people who have left anger, bitterness, wrath and slander behind. If we are merciful and serene, taking the initiative to reach out to others, our very approachability will overcome the shyness and fear of those for whom we reach out.

A Prayer Before Receiving Holy Communion

I believe, O Lord, and I confess that You are truly the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am first. I believe also that this is truly Your own pure Body, and that this is truly Your own precious Blood. Therefore I pray to You: have mercy upon me and forgive my transgressions both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, of knowledge and of ignorance. And make me worthy to partake without condemnation of Your most pure Mysteries, for the remission of my sins, and unto life everlasting. Amen.

Of Your Mystical Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant; for I will not speak of Your Mystery to Your enemies, neither like Judas will I give You a kiss; but like the thief will I confess You : Remember me, O Lord in Your Kingdom.

May the communion of Your Holy Mysteries be neither to my judgment, nor to my condemnation, O Lord, but to the healing of soul and body. Amen.

Appendix

St John Chrysostom – Homily on Ephesians 4:25-27

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil.

[Paul has been describing “the old man” which like old and tattered clothes we agreed to “put off” at our baptism in order that we might “put on” the new life in Christ. St John Chrysostom now goes on to show what the “old man” means in detail to Paul].

Having spoken of the old man generally, Paul next draws him in detail; for this kind of teaching is more easily learned when we learn by particulars. And what does he say? *So then, putting away falsehood.* What sort of falsehood? Does he mean idols? Surely not, even though they are also falsehood. However, he is not now speaking of idols here, because those to whom he is writing had nothing to do with them. Paul is speaking about what passes between one person and another, meaning that which is deceitful and false. “Speak the truth, each one of you,” he says, “with his neighbor.” Then what is still more touching to the conscience, *because we are members one of another.* Let no man deceive his neighbor. As the Psalmist says here and there, *With flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak* (Ps. 12:2.) For there is nothing, no, nothing that produces so much enmity as deceit and guile.

Observe how everywhere he shames them by comparison with the body. *Let not the eye,* says he, *lie to the foot, nor the foot to the eye.* For example, if there shall be a deep pit, and then by having reeds laid across upon the mouth of it upon the earth, and yet concealed under earth, it shall by its appearance furnish to the eye an expectation of solid ground, will not the eye use the foot, and discover whether it yields and is hollow underneath, or whether it is firm and resists? Will the foot tell a lie, and not report the truth as it is? And what again? If the eye were to spy a serpent or a wild beast, will it lie to the foot? Will it not at once inform it, and the foot thus informed by it refrain from going on? And what again, when neither the foot nor the eye shall know how to distinguish, but all shall depend upon the smelling, as, for example, whether a drug be deadly or not; will the smelling lie to the mouth?

And why not? Because it will be destroying itself also. But it tells the truth as it appears to itself. And what again? Will the tongue lie to the stomach? Does it not, when a thing is bitter, reject it, and, if it is sweet, pass it on? Observe ministrations, and interchange of service; observe a provident care arising from truth, and, as one might say, spontaneously from the heart. So surely should it be with us also; let us not lie, since we are members one of another. This is a sure token of friendship; whereas the contrary is of enmity. What then, you will ask, if a man shall use treachery against you? Harken to the truth. If he use treachery, he is not a member; whereas he says, lie not towards the members.

Be angry, and sin not.

Observe his wisdom. He both speaks to prevent our sinning, and, if we do not listen, still does not forsake us; for his fatherly compassion does not desert him. For just as the physician prescribes to the sick what he must do, and if he does not submit to it, still does not treat him with contempt, but proceeds to add what advice he can by persuasion, and continues to go on with the cure; so also does Paul. Indeed, he who does otherwise aims only at reputation, and is annoyed at being disregarded; whereas he who on all occasions aims at the recovery of the patient, has this single object in view, how he may restore the patient, and raise him up again. This then is what Paul is doing. He has said, *Lie not.* Yet if ever lying should produce anger, he goes on again to cure this also. For what does he say? *Be angry, and sin not.* It would have been good never to be angry. Yet if ever any one should fall into passion, still let him not fall into so great a degree. *For let not the sun,* he says, *go down upon your anger.* Would you have your fill of anger? One hour, or two, or three, is enough for you; let not the sun depart, and leave you both at enmity. It was of God's goodness that the sun rose: let it not depart, having shone on unworthy human beings. For if the Lord of His great goodness sent the sun, and has Himself forgiven you your sins, and yet you forgive not your neighbor, look, how great an evil this is!

And there is yet another besides this. The blessed Paul dreads the night, lest overtaking in solitude him that was wronged, still burning with anger, it should again kindle up the fire. For as long

as there are many things in the daytime to banish it, you are free to indulge it; but as soon as ever the evening comes on, be reconciled, extinguish the evil while it is yet fresh; for should night overtake it, the next day will be unable to extinguish the further evil which will have been collected overnight. No, even though you should cut off the greater portion, and yet not be able to cut off the whole, it will again supply from what is left for the following night, to make the blaze more violent. And just as, should the sun be unable by the heat of the day to soften and disperse that part of the air which has been during the night condensed into cloud, it leaves material for a tempest. Night overtakes what is left and feeds it again with fresh vapors: so also is it in the case of anger.

Neither give place to the devil.

So then to be at war with one another, is to give place to the devil. We should have been standing closely together in order to make our stand against the devil. But instead we have relaxed our enmity against him, and are giving the signal for turning against each other. For never has the devil such *place* as in our enmities. Numberless are the evils this produces. And as stones in a building, so long as they are closely fitted together and leave no space, will stand firm, while if there is but a single needle's passage through, or a crevice no broader than a hair, this destroys and ruins all; so is it with the devil. So long indeed as we are closely set and compacted together, he cannot introduce one of his wiles; but when he causes us to relax a little, he rushes in like a torrent. In every case he needs only a beginning, and this is the thing which it is difficult to accomplish; but this done, he makes room on all sides for himself. For henceforth he opens the ear to slanders, and they who speak lies are the more trusted: they have enmity which plays the advocate, not truth which judges justly. And as, where friendship is, even those evils which are true appear false, so where there is enmity, even the false appear true. There is a different mind, a different tribunal, which does not hear fairly, but with great bias and partiality. As, in a balance, if lead is cast into the scale, it will drag down the whole; so is it also here, only that the weight of enmity is far heavier than any lead.

For this reason then, let us, I beseech you, do all we can to extinguish our enmities before the sun goes down. For if you fail to master it on the very first day, both on the following, and oftentimes even for a year, you will be protracting

it, and the enmity will keep growing without any help. For by causing us to suspect that words spoken in one sense were meant in another, and gestures also, and everything, it infuriates and exasperates us, and makes us more distempered than madmen, not enduring either to utter a name, or to hear it, but saying everything in invective and abuse.

How then are we to calm this passion? How shall we extinguish the flame? By reflecting on our own sins, and how much we have to answer for to God; by reflecting that we are wreaking vengeance, not on an enemy, but on ourselves; by reflecting that we are delighting the devil, that we are strengthening our enemy, our real enemy, and that we are doing his work by doing wrong to our own members. Do you want to be revengeful and at enmity? Be at enmity, but be so with the devil, and not with one of your own members. For this purpose it is that God has armed us with anger, not that we should thrust the sword against our own bodies, but that we should baptize the whole blade in the devil's breast. There bury the sword up to the hilt; yea, if you will, hilt and all, and never draw it out again, but add yet another and another. And this actually comes to pass when we are merciful to those of our own spiritual family and peaceably disposed one towards another. Perish money, perish glory and reputation; my own member is dearer to me than they all. Thus let us say to ourselves; let us not do violence to our own nature to gain wealth, to obtain glory.

Let him that stole, says he, steal no more.

Do you see what are the members of the old man? Falsehood, revenge, theft. Why *didn't* he say, "Let him that stole be punished, be tortured, be racked"; but, *let him steal no more? Rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.*

Where are they which are called pure; they that are full of all defilement, and yet dare to give themselves a name like this? For it is possible, very possible, to put off the reproach, not only by ceasing from the sin, but by working some good thing also. Do you see how we ought to get past the sin? They stole. This is the sin. They steal no more. This is not to do away the sin. But how shall they do away with it then? If they labor, and charitably communicate to others. This is how they can do away with this sin. He does not simply desire that we should work, but so work as to labor in order to give to others. For the thief indeed works, but it is that which is evil.

Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth.

What is corrupt speech? That which is said elsewhere to be also idle, backbiting, filthy communication, jesting, foolish talking. Do you see how he is cutting up the very roots of anger? Lying, theft, unseasonable conversation. The words, however, *Let him steal no more*, he does not say in order to excuse the thief but to pacify the injured parties, and to recommend that they be content as long as they won't have to suffer this again. And he gives good advice also concerning conversation, since we shall pay the penalty, not for our deeds only, but also for our words.

But such as is good, he proceeds, *for edifying, as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear.*

That is to say, only speak in a way that edifies your neighbor, not a word more. For to this end God gave you a mouth and a tongue, that you might give thanks to Him, that you might build up your neighbor. So that if you destroy that building, it would have been better to be silent, and never to speak at all. For indeed the hands of the workmen, if instead of raising the walls, they should learn to pull them down, would justly deserve to be cut off. For so also says the Psalmist; *The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips* (Ps. 12:3.) The mouth— this is the cause of all evil; or rather not the mouth, but they that make an evil use of it. From the mouth proceed insults, revilings, blasphemies, incentives to lusts, murders, adulteries, thefts, all have their origin from this. And how, you will say, do murders? Because from insult you will go on to anger, from anger to blows, from blows to murder. And how, again, adultery? “Such a woman,” someone will say, “loves you, she said something nice about you.” This at once unstrings your firmness, and thus are your passions kindled within you.

Therefore Paul said, *such as is good*. Since then there is so vast a flow of words, he with good reason speaks indefinitely, charging us to use expressions of that kind, and giving us a pattern of communication. What then is this? By saying, for edifying, either he means this, that he who hears you may be grateful to you: as, for instance, a brother has committed fornication; do not make a display of the offense, nor revel in it; you will be doing no good to him that hears you. Rather, it is likely, you will hurt him, by giving him a stimulus. Instead, advise him what to do, and you are conferring on him a great obligation. Discipline him how to keep silence, teach him to revile no

man, and you have taught him his best lesson, you will have conferred upon him the highest obligation. Discourse with him on contrition, on piety, on almsgiving; all these things will soften his soul, for all these things he will own his obligation. But if you excite his laughter or collaborate in filthy talk you will rather be inflaming him. Applaud the wickedness, and you will overturn and ruin him.

Or else he means this, that it may make them, the hearers, full of grace. For as sweet ointment gives grace to them that partake of it, so also does good speech. This is why someone once said, *Your name is as ointment poured forth* (Song of Songs, 1:3). It caused them to exhale that sweet perfume. You see that what he continually recommends, he is saying now also, charging every one according to their abilities to edify their neighbors. You then who give such advice to others, how much more to yourself!

And grieve not, he adds, *the Holy Spirit of God.*

This is even more awe-inspiring and startling, as he also says in the *Epistle to the Thessalonians*; for there too he uses an expression of this sort. He that rejects, rejects not man, but God (1 Thes 4:8). So also here. If you utter a reproachful word, if you strike your brother, you are not striking him, you are grieving the Holy Spirit. And then is added further the benefit bestowed, in order to heighten the rebuke. *And grieve not the Holy Spirit, says He, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption.*

He it is who marks us as a royal flock. He, who separates us from all former things. He, who rescues us from among those who remain exposed to the wrath of God— and do you grieve Him? Look how startling are his words there; *For he that rejects*, says he, *rejects not man, but God*: and how cutting the words are here, *Grieve not the Holy Spirit*, he says, *in whom you were sealed.*

Let this seal then abide upon your mouth, and never destroy the impression. A spiritual mouth never utters a thing of the kind. Do not say “It is nothing, if I do utter an unseemly word, if I do insult someone.” For this very reason is it a great evil, because it seems to be nothing. For things which seem to be nothing are thus easily thought lightly of; and those which are thought lightly of go on increasing; and those which go on increasing become incurable.

You have a spiritual mouth. Think what words you uttered immediately upon being born — what words are worthy of your mouth. You call God, Father, and do you straightway revile your brother? Think, how is that you learned to call God, Father?

Is it from nature? No, you could never say so. Is it from your goodness? No, nor is it thus. But where does it come from then? It is from pure lovingkindness, from tenderness, from His great mercy. Whenever then you call God, Father, consider not only this, that by reviling you are committing things unworthy of that, your high birth, but also that it is of lovingkindness that you have that high birth. Do not disgrace it then, after receiving it from pure lovingkindness, by showing cruelty towards your brethren. Do you call God Father, and yet revile? No, these are not the works of the Son of God. These are very far from Him. The work of the Son of God was to forgive His enemies, to pray for them that crucified Him, to shed His blood for them that hated Him. These are works worthy of the Son of God, to make His enemies— the ungrateful, the dishonest, the reckless, the treacherous,— to make these brethren and heirs: not to treat them that are become brethren with ignominy like slaves.

Think what words your mouth uttered— of what table these words are worthy. Think what your mouth touches, what it tastes, of what manner of food it partakes! Do you deem yourself to be doing nothing grievous in railing at your brother? How then do you call him brother? And yet if he is not a brother, how do you say, *Our Father*? For the word *Our* is indicative of many persons. Think with whom you stand at the time of the mysteries! With the Cherubim, with the Seraphim! The Seraphim revile not: no, their mouth fulfills this one and only duty, to sing the Hymn of praise, to glorify God. And how then shall you be able to say with them, Holy, Holy, Holy, if you use your mouth for reviling? Tell me, I pray. Suppose there were a royal vessel, a bowl, and that it was always full of royal sweets, and set apart for that purpose, and then imagine that one of the servants was to take the bowl and use it as a chamber pot for holding dung. Would he ever venture again, after it had been filled with dung, to store it away with those other vessels, set apart for those other uses? Surely not. Now railing is like this, reviling is like this.

Our Father! But what? is this all? Hear also the words, which follow, *who art in Heaven*. The moment you say, *Our Father, who art in Heaven*, the word raises you up, it gives wings to your mind, it points out to you that you have a Father in Heaven. Do then nothing, speak nothing of things upon earth. He has set you among that host above, He has numbered you with that heavenly choir. Why do you drag yourself down? You are

standing beside the royal throne, and you revile. Are you not afraid lest the king should deem it an outrage? Why, if a servant, even with us, beats his fellow-servant or assaults him, even though he do it justly, yet we at once rebuke him, and deem the act an outrage; and yet do you, who are standing with the Cherubim beside the king's throne, revile your brother? Do you see not these holy vessels? Are they not used continually for only one purpose? Does any one ever venture to use them for any other? Yet you are holier than these vessels, yes, far holier. Why then defile, why contaminate yourself? You are standing in Heaven, and you revile? Your citizenship is with the Angels, and you revile? You are counted worthy of the Lord's kiss, and you revile? Has God graced your mouth with so many and great things, with angelic hymns, with food, not angelic, no, but more than angelic, with His own kiss, with His own embrace, and do you revile? Oh, no, I implore you. Vast are the evils of which this is the source; far be it from a Christian soul.

Do I not convince you as I am speaking, do I not shame you? Then it now becomes my duty to alarm you. For hear what Christ says: *Whosoever shall say to his brother, You fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire* (Matt. v. 22.) Now if that which is lightest of all leads to hell, of what shall not he be worthy, who utters presumptuous words? Let us discipline our mouth to silence. Great is the advantage from this, great the mischief from ill language. We must not spend our riches here. Let us put door and bolt upon them. Let us devour ourselves alive if ever a vexatious word slip out of our mouth. Let us entreat God, let us entreat him whom we have reviled. Let us not think it beneath us to do so. It is ourselves we have wounded, not him. Let us apply the remedy, prayer, and reconciliation with him whom we have reviled. If in our words we are to take such forethought, much more let us impose laws upon ourselves in our deeds. Yes, and if we have friends, whoever they may be, and they should speak evil to any man or revile him, demand of them and exact satisfaction. Let us by all means learn that such conduct is even sin; for if we learn this, we shall soon depart from it.

Now the God of peace keep both your mind and your tongue, and fence you with a sure fence, even His fear, through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory forever. Amen.