

Lying, Anger & Stealing

Ephesians 4:25-28

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, August 9, 2020

Good morning and welcome to another Sunday morning service here at Grace Fellowship Chilliwack. It's good to see you here today. If you're new to us or regular attendee, we want to say welcome to you. We're so glad you're here. Since it's the summer, we don't have as much going on right now, especially in light of the Coronavirus; and so we don't get to see each other as regularly as we want to. So, it's a special thing when Sunday morning comes around, isn't it? It's a special thing to be here, so it is good to see you in church. For those of you who are joining us online, we want to say a special welcome to you as well. We know that some of you couldn't make it this morning due to the virus. It wasn't safe for you, but we want to let you know that we haven't forgotten you. You are still on our minds and our hearts and we think about you daily. You know I was thinking about that this week I was thinking about all those who couldn't be here with us and it makes you long for heaven, doesn't it? I mean, it makes you long for eternity, because there will be no Coronavirus in heaven, amen? I mean, there'll be no sickness there. And so, we won't be apart, and we'll be together forever. And we'll be sinless! Isn't that even better? We'll be together with no sin, so that'll be one of the joys that we're looking forward to there.

I also want to mention that, you know, while the virus has brought some challenges to our church, while it's brought some difficulties, it's also brought some good things as well. I think we need to mention that it's brought some blessings along with it. In fact, to highlight that this week, I just sat down at my desk and I wrote out a list of think good things that have come out of this pandemic – blessings that have come out of it. For one thing, it's made us stop taking church for granted. I mean, it's made us stop taking *this* for granted because for a while we couldn't have *this*. For a while there was no church to meet with. There was a universal church. There was an invisible church, but the visible church had to be set aside and so it's made us remember how grateful we should be to have a place to meet. It's also made us stop taking salvation for granted I think, as well. Stop taking the Bible for granted because a lot of people are asking questions right now, a lot of people are wondering things that they don't have answers to, like, "Why is the world so bad?" And "Why do things like this happen?" And "Where is God? And "Is there any hope?" and all these questions that the world has no answers to? We have answers to. We have something to say to that. We've also seen several new visitors to our church during this time. Some new counseling opportunities. We started a new YouTube channel for the videos that we're putting online. But the point is that God is doing all of this right now through this trial. God is doing all of these good things through the Coronavirus, and we need to remember that. I mean so many times in the Christian life, we get discouraged by trials only. We get discouraged when things like this happen, because we can't see God, and then we can we forget that He's there. But friends, God is always there. God is always in a trial; He's always working, and this time is no exception to that. We should be thankful for what God is doing during these trials.

I heard one pastor say you don't want to ever waste the crisis as a church. When crisis comes, that's an opportunity for the church to step up. And we want to do that during this time.

With that in mind, while we're talking about trials and the Lord's goodness, I want to invite you to turn to a book in the Bible that talks about that this morning. It talks about the goodness of God and that is the book of Ephesians. That's the book we're in this morning, if you would turn to the book of Ephesians, we're in chapter four. During our worship service, Kevin just read from James 1 to us because it talks about some of the themes of this chapter; but our passage is in Ephesians 4:17. If you would read this with me, Paul writes this,

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that You walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which is in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH, EACH ONE OF YOU WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. BE ANGRY, AND YET DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labour, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

We'll end the reading there. Just to explain this to you a little bit. It's been said that one principle of hermeneutics or Bible interpretation (we looked at a principle last week), but another one is the history principle. The history principle says that in order to understand what a passage means you have to understand history, or what people from the past have said about it. We're not the first ones to study a text; we're not the first ones to look at it. Christians for thousands of years have done that, and we need to understand what they say. And when you look at history, you see

that the book of Ephesians has been given a lot of names. It's been called a lot of things in the past, like the Believers Bank and the Christian's Chequebook, because it tells you about your riches. It tells you about the treasures that you have in Christ. It's like an open bank that you can look at and just pull God's blessings out of it. It's also been called the Grand Canyon of Scripture or the Himalaya of Blessing because it tells you how far your blessings go. It tells you how deep they go because you're not just blessed a little bit in the book of Ephesians, you're blessed a lot. You're not just given a few treasures in here, you're given a lot of treasure. You're overflowing with treasure. In fact, last week, I reminded you that chapter one, verse three starts off this way. This is how Paul begins the book in chapter one, verse three. This is the theme of it:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

As you read that, you can see the theme leaps off the page. Paul says, "You have been blessed." You may not feel blessed, but you are blessed. You may not feel like God has given you so much treasure in so many riches, but that's okay because feelings have nothing to do with it. He has. It's a fact. This is a positional blessing; it's not situational. This is a heavenly blessing, which means the things on earth don't change it. This is so important because I meet so many Christians who tell me that they feel discouraged in the Christian life. Do you guys know what I mean? You know, you leave every Sunday feeling encouraged, you come back feeling discouraged. You come out feeling rich, you come back feeling poor because you're beaten up by the world. Paul says you don't need to feel that way. You don't need to be tired because God has blessed you. He's made you rich. And to show you this, Paul says there are several blessings in the Christian life. In this book, you have several riches, just a summary of what we've talked about. For instance, chapter one says that you're chosen and adopted and sealed with the Spirit. That's how he starts the book. Chapter two says you've been made alive; you've been raised up and seated in the heavenlies in Christ. So that's where you are now. That's where your riches are, they're in heaven. You don't get all your riches now; you get them later. Chapter three says because of this, you have peace and strength and power through His Spirit in the inner man so that you don't have to be tired anymore. You don't have to be worn out. You have power. God has given you strength. And chapter four gives you the application of all this now, that's how the book kind of progresses. Chapter four tells you how to respond to that. And if you look in chapter four verse 25, which we just read, Paul says,

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH, EACH ONE OF YOU WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.

what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. And we'll explain that in a moment and walk you through that., but before we do, I want you to notice what this says. This says in response to your blessings, you need to put aside sin. That's

what you do. You put aside the evil that's in you, whether it's lying or anger, whatever. And I also want you to notice and this is very important, I want you to notice where this falls in the book. If you notice this follows after the blessings and not before, do you get that? Putting off sin comes after the promises given in chapters one through three. That's important. You don't want to miss this because so many times people try to do all this, that we're going to talk about this morning, and they fail. They try to lay aside falsehood, or they try to stop getting angry, they try to stop sinning and they can't do it because they do it in their own strength. They do it in their own power. Paul says you don't want to do that. What we're about to talk about this morning, it doesn't happen in your own power. It happens in the power of God. What we're about to talk about this morning, it's a result of the blessing. It's not what you do to earn it. Does that make sense?

This is also important, because you've got to realize as we talk about this subject today, this is not about you anymore. This is about God. That's important as well. Ultimately, when it comes to fighting sin and fighting temptation and doing battle with the world, it's not about you doing things; it's about God doing things through you. The weight is not on your shoulders, it's on God. The burden is not on you, it's on Him. So many times, people will fight sin and they fight it by saying, "Well, I'll just do better next time. I'll just do more next time." And before long, it's just I, I, I; just me, me, me. Friends, you need to understand that the Christian life is not about you. The battle with sin is not about you, it's about God and what He does through you. He carries your burdens, He fights your sin, which is what we're going to talk about today.

To explain this to you, verse 25 starts off with the word "therefore" to point you back to what was said before, to point you back to what said above. Verse 20 says,

But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self,

I told you last week this word "renew" here is a Greek word *ananeóō*, which is a compound word from *ana*, again and *neóō*, to think. It means to think again, or to think new thoughts. This is what the Christian life is about. This is what it comes down to. You need to think new thoughts. You need to think through life again, Paul says. Because when you get saved, there's so much that you don't understand; there's so much you have wrong. You've got to reconsider it. So many times people come into our church, if they come in from a pagan background, there's so much that they just don't get. They don't know how to be a husband. They don't know how to be a wife. They don't know how to be a parent. They don't know how to fight addiction. All that's got to be rethought in their mind. Verse 25 says you do that by laying aside the old self and putting on the new. You need to lay aside what you were before you were saved, before you became a Christian, and put on what you are now that you are one. Again, this is all of God, but

you're just realizing what He's done for you. And as you do that, verse 25 says, "Therefore laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you to his neighbor." in other words, this is what it looks like to lay aside the old self. This is what it looks like to renew your mind, you lay aside your sin no matter what the sin is.

And you can tell why Paul does this, You can tell why he immediately starts talking about sin in verse 25 after talking about renewing your mind because we live in a world where sin is laughed at, don't we? We live in a time when sin is ridiculed like never before. People just don't take their sin seriously anymore. And we've looked at examples of this in the past, several sins that people laugh at today. You know, I mean, let's say it this way, we live in a very polite part of the world. Canada, B.C. it's a very polite place, but let me tell you, it's still sinful.

You know, one thing we haven't mentioned in this series. Just to give an example, this is the sin of cohabitation. It's the sin of cohabitation or the sin of living together out of wedlock. I mean, that's more common today in this society than ever before. It's become a plague. The government even had to invent a term for it. They had to invent a phrase called "common law." Common law families, common law households, it refers to a couple who lives together for two years or more without getting married. In other words, they live in sin. In 2016, the last time the census was taken, it was found that 20% of all couples in Canada fit that description. Twenty percent of couples in Canada are common law couples, and it was also discovered that the number has gone up three times since 1980. It's tripled. in British Columbia, some are even saying that it's growing so rapidly, it's growing faster than the rate of married couples. Which is having a devastating impact on our society. It's having a devastating impact on our culture because it's making us laugh at sin. It's so common now.

Some of you, don't know what to call your neighbor. Are they a Mr. or Mrs.? Do they have the same last name or do they not? And here's the saddest part, what do you call the children? Whose last name do they have? It's all it's all a mess. It's all so tragic.

What Paul says here is as a Christian, you can't get caught up in that anymore. As a believer, you live a different life. You are changed, you are renewed, and your mind has been renewed from that. You don't judge those people, but you're set apart from them. You pray for them, you witness to them; but you can't laugh at sin anymore the way the world does. Whatever the sin is.

The New Testament commentator, H. A. Ironside said "It's a poor thing to talk of living in the heavenlies if we continue to walk like the world. It's a poor thing to talk of being raised up with Christ if we continue to live like we're down in the dumps. There needs to be a change in us."

There needs to be a difference in the way that we look at sin, which is what we're going to talk about this morning. So if you're taking notes in Ephesians 4, we're going to look at three sins you

need to put off in this passage. That's our outline for today. That's what it's about is. As Paul is talking about this topic, as he's getting our minds around this, he gives us three sins that we need to put off in this passage.

The first thing you need to put off is the sin of lying, the sin of lying, which is probably the most common sin of all right? I mean, he starts off at the very top. If you were to count up your sins, I bet this would be the one that comes at the beginning. People lie from birth, don't they? I mean, if you've got a little child, you know that they'll tell lies. You didn't teach them to do that. You didn't sit them down and say, "Hey, honey, listen, you're telling too much truth. I need you to lie a little bit." You don't do that. This is a sin that's been around for forever. And if you look in verse 25, here's what Paul says about it.

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH, EACH ONE OF YOU WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.

Just a little background on this, if you notice, as Paul is telling us how to renew our mind here. As he's telling us how to think new thoughts and put off the old man and put on the new man, he goes into a list of sins because he's a practical guy. Paul was very hands on in his letters. He didn't just give you the truth, he wants you to apply it. He didn't just give you some kind of pie in the sky idea, he wants you to show you what it looks like in everyday life. And he says, "Here's how you lay aside the old man. Here's how you renew your mind. You need to stop lying. You need to stop twisting what comes out of your mouth, you need to stop distorting it for your advantage."

The word "lying" here it's a Greek word *pseudos*, from which we get the word pseudo. It just means something, something false or fake. It refers to something that is artificial. Paul says you need to stop doing that as a Christian. You need to stop doing that as a believer. Stop being artificial with people. We've had people come to our church and tell us, "I feel like I can be myself here. I feel I can be real." Well, that's good because that's what God wants of you. I mean one of the most important hallmarks of the Christian life is honesty. That's what God wants from you more than anything else. He wants you to be sincere. You can be a lot of things and that's okay, as long as you're sincere. You can be a failure, you can be a loser, you can be a sinner. All that's fine. If you're honest about it and you repent; but you can't be a liar. You can't be a hypocrite. God doesn't accept that. This is also very important for the church. If you notice in verse 25, Paul says, here's how he ended the verse,

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH, EACH ONE OF YOU WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.

That last phrase there tells you why you need to do this, why this is so important because we're members of one another. We belong to each other. We're a family and families can't make it if people lie. No family can survive if one person says one thing and one person says another.

Let's be practical here. You know, some of you might read a passage like this and say, "You know, I don't know why this is in here because I don't struggle with this. I'm an honest person." Or "Paul, I don't know why you start with this because it's not that big of a deal. I mean, maybe there's a little dishonesty but I live in a good world with good people." But let's talk about that.

Let's talk about how good the world is. I'll give you a couple scenarios here. Let's say you go buy a car; and as you're buying a car, what are you worried about? What are you anxious about? You're anxious about being lied to, right? That's what you're worried about. You're worried that the guy across the desk who's smiling real nice and has nice hair is about to sell you a jalopy. He's gonna cheat you on the deal, right? Well, let's say you go buy a house, what are you worried about there? Same thing. You go to work, you're worried that your co-worker is gonna lie to you. You turn on the news, you're afraid that the broadcaster is gonna lie to you. You go to the bank, you go to the store, wherever you go, you're worried about it because we live in a world full of lies. And we have protection for that. Our credit card has protection for things like identity fraud, right? We're afraid they're gonna lie. You have to get your credit card statement and read it and make sure nothing was charged that wasn't on your account. This is just a common problem in our world.

And if you're not careful, Paul says, that can creep into the church. If you're not careful, this same spirit of lying can take over in this place. And here's what it looks like. This how subtle it is. Let's say someone comes to you after church, they come to you in the parking lot. And they say, "Hey, I need your help. I need some advice. Do you think I talk too much?" Now, depending on how long that question comes out of their mouth, the answers already probably there. But "Several people have told me I do; my friends say I do. I'm not sure, but I trust you. Do you think I'm a blabber mouth?" What would you say? Most of us, if we're honest about it, we would lie to them. Right? We wouldn't want to hurt their feelings. We wouldn't want them to be mad at us. So we would say, "No, it's not that bad. No, people are just exaggerating." And it's all a lie.

And let's say someone invites you to coffee. They invite you to Tim Hortons and as you sit down, they say, "You know, I'm having trouble at home. I'm having trouble with my kids and you know me. You've seen me close up. You're my friend. Can you tell me, am I doing something wrong? Is there something I need to change in my parenting?" What would you say to that? See, most of us would lie there too, right?

It gets even worse if you have to practice church discipline. It gets even worse if you have to confront someone sin because then lying happens very regularly. But my point is that the world is full of lies. And if we're not careful, the church can be full of it too.

Paul says it shouldn't be that way. It shouldn't be that way with us because our minds have been renewed; we have changed on the inside, so we shouldn't lie anymore. You want to be tactful, you want to be careful with how you say things, but you need to tell the truth. And just to highlight the significance of this sin, do you know that the first sin ever committed was a lie? The first sin ever committed was a deception.

The serpent asked Eve, the serpent said, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" And Eve replied, "From the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" You know, that was a lie. God didn't say that. God said, "Don't eat" but He never said, "Don't touch." He said, "Don't taste the fruit." But he never said, "don't hold it." Eve was exaggerating. That's where sin began. Sin began with a lie, and because of that, Satan is called the father of lies because he's the one responsible for it. And when you lie, no matter how small the lie is, you are following the devil. You're acting like he does.

The Bible also says the first sin the church disciplined was a lie. Ananias and Sapphira lied about the price of their land and God struck them dead over a lie. Book of Revelation says that this is a sin that will keep you out of heaven; you will go to hell along with the immoral and cowardly if you lie, but the point is that this is how serious this is to God. This is what He thinks about it. He hates it. He can't stand it when we lie and we should feel the same way over this sin.

Which leads to another sin to put off this morning we're just going to kind of walk through these together. Another one to talk about. The first one is the sin of lying, it's where Paul starts. This is the sin of dishonesty or falsehood, twisting the truth, turning it, distorting it for whatever reason, which we do a lot.

Some of you guys remember years ago when I stood up here and tore the 10 commandments. Do you guys remember that? We talked about how we break them. And that command, "Thou shalt not lie," you could stand up here and tear that thing all day long. You've broken it so many times. That's where Paul begins this list, it's a sobering list.

The second thing to talk about, a second sin to put off is the sin of anger. The second sin Paul mentions in this list, sin to put off, is the sin of anger. Which refers to the sin of getting upset or irritated about something, which is a big one as well, right? This is a big one too. And if you look in verse 25, reading on in the passage, Paul writes and he says,

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH, EACH ONE OF YOU WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. BE ANGRY, AND YET DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.

As Paul goes on talking about the sins of the mind here, sins to put off, he mentions a darker and uglier one. I mean, lying is ugly, let's be honest, but it's not quite like anger. Anger is destructive. It's very dark. You could argue that many more lives have been hurt by the sin of anger than any other sin.

And just to explain this from a broad perspective, before we talk about everything in this passage, there's several words for anger in here. This is helpful. Paul looks at it from several different angle angles. For example, he says, "Be angry and do not sin." That's the Greek word *orgē* from which we get the word orgy. It means unbridled lust, unbridled, uncontrolled anger. It's the kind when someone loses their temper, they just pop off. Punch a wall. Shout some vulgar word. Then he says, "Do not let the sun go down on your anger," and that's another word. That's another term that he uses here. That's the Greek word *parorgismōs* which means long standing anger or ongoing anger. It's the kind of anger that holds a grudge. You know if the first one, *orgē*, is like a volcano blowing up, the other one is like a molten lava down beneath just bubbling. It's the kind of anger you often see in old married couples, where one member says to the other, "Do you remember what you said 20 years ago? I'm still mad about that." That's this word. They probably don't remember.

Then verse 31 further down says "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice." There you see several other words that refer to anger there. It's like Paul had to stretch the boundaries of language to describe it, but the idea here is that all of this needs to be laid aside now. All of this needs to be put away. In fact, Paul says "Be angry and yet do not sin," which means it's okay to be angry. It's okay to be upset. You just can't sit over it. You've got to be upset over the right things. I think we all understand that it's okay to get angry when someone abuses a child. You should get angry over that. That should make you mad. And it's okay to be angry when someone teaches heresy. Paul did that. Jesus did that. But it's not okay to get angry when someone gets on your nerves, right? It's not okay to get angry when someone cuts you off in traffic or takes too long at the drive thru line at Starbucks. You're going to get your coffee you can be calm. That's selfish, that's sinful; you can't do that.

The verse goes on to say, "Do not let the sun go down on your anger and do not give the devil an opportunity." Which means if you see yourself getting angry this way, you need to repent of it quickly. If you see yourself sinning in anger, you need to stop now before the day is done. There's been a lot of discussion as to what does it mean to not let the sun go down on your anger? You know, does that mean that if you are married and you're fighting with your spouse, you got to stay up until one in the morning and work it out? Well, maybe, but it seems like the

theme here, the point here is that you need to handle it quickly. You need to handle it fast because it's going to do damage if you don't. Paul says if you don't handle it fast quickly, you'll give the devil an opportunity to make you sin even more. I can't tell you how many marriages or families that have been ruined over this simply because somebody got angry. Somebody held a grudge. I can't tell you how many churches have been ruined over this as well. I mean hundreds of churches, thousands of churches have been ruined over something that happened 15 years ago. Someone let the devil into to church.

And if you were with us last week, you remember I told you that some of our members have been trained up in biblical counseling they've been trained up and certified with ACBC or The Association of Certified Biblical Counselors. And when I went through their training, one of the documents they gave me was called the Journal of Upsets. It is an assignment that you give to people when they're angry, to document every time they got mad in the week, very interesting. But they write down every time they got upset, no matter how small it was; and at the end of the week, they come into the office and you talk to them about it. And you look for patterns and you look for times and things that set them off. It was interesting, because every time I sat down with someone with that assignment, they all did the same thing. They were all ashamed at how petty their anger was. Whatever it was that got them mad when they sat down and wrote it down, they saw how stupid it was. "My wife spilled my coffee; my kids broke the lamp." And it was also interesting because after looking at it, they all told me that it would all go away if they just forgave somebody. I mean, all the anger would disappear if they would just let it go. This is what Paul says here. That's what this passage says. You need to let it go before the sun goes down. You don't have the right to be angry for decades and years.

One commentator said that this means that you shouldn't be bad tempered all the time. I think we've all met people who woke up on the wrong side of the bed every day, right? They came into church with a case of the grouches. Paul says you can't do that. You can't act that way as a Christian and this commentator also said this means you should not be easily provoked. You shouldn't be easily offended because that's where a lot of our anger comes from. That's where it starts. We're just so sensitive all the time. We're so touchy. And he also said this means that you can't let your anger get out of control even when it's justified. Even if you're angry over the right things, you can't let it get out of control because you've changed. That's the idea of this passage, right? You're different.

I've met people that they had been arrested for assault and battery. They'd been arrested for drunken fights. And when they got saved, they became a teddy bear, because God changed them. They still had to work some of that out, but that's what this is describing here. We need to change. If you look in verse 32, further down, this gives you a little insight into this. And Paul writes and he says,

Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God and Christ also forgave you.

And the idea here is that God has forgiven you of so much, He's pardoned you of so many sins, so many offenses and He's not gotten angry with you. If God wrote down a Journal of Upsets, it would go from now until eternity. There wouldn't be enough ink in the world to write it down And He's forgiven you. He's pardoned you. You have to do the same for others. You don't have a choice.

Some of you will remember the parable Jesus told about the unmerciful slave who owed the King 10,000 talents, remember that? That's the equivalent of 200,000 years of labour in that economy. It's like a billion dollars of debt. He must have been high up in the king's office, some kind of government official, but he owed more money than he could ever pay or even see in his lifetime. And the king forgave him. Remember that parable? He pardoned the slave. And then the slave went out, found a fellow slave who owed him 100 denarii, that's 100 days work. That's about a third of a year's worth of labor. You compare those two amounts. What is that, \$30,000? And he beat him. And in response, the king went to the former slave and threw him in jail. And Jesus said this, "In a similar way, my Heavenly Father will do the same to you. If each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart." In other words, you have no excuse if you are harboring anger towards someone. You have no excuse if you don't forgive them, especially when you remember how much God has forgiven you. We're all the first slave. We're all the slave that owes billions of dollars, so we have to forgive our other fellow slaves.

It leads to one more point to consider this morning. One more sin to put off in this passage, just to review these other ones. The first sin to put off is the sin of lying which refers to the sin of falsehood and deceit. And the second one is the sin of anger. Second sin to put off is the sin of anger; refers to the sin of getting irritated, upset, losing our temper, all those things fall into this category. We've all done this one before. Which leads to one more point to consider.

A third and final sin to put off for this morning and that's the sin of stealing. The third sin to put off that Paul mentions in this passage is the sin of stealing, which just refers to taking something that doesn't belong to you. Or coveting it, wanting it. If you read on the passage, Paul writes,

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH, EACH ONE OF YOU WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. BE ANGRY, AND YET DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labour, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.

Just to go through the rest of this passage here, you know, as Paul continues on, you can tell that he's pulling no punches here. He is getting personal because if you remember the context for this, Paul was writing this letter to be read out loud. In the first century, what they would do with the apostles' letters is they would, a lot of people couldn't read in the church, a lot of people were illiterate, So they would stand up on a Sunday morning like this and read the letter in front of everybody. Now, if you're in a house church of 20 people or so, which is probably what this church was like in Ephesus, that means you would know who he's talking about. You would know who the liars and the angry people and the thieves are. You could see eyes going around the room as this is being read. It's kind of an interesting background here, but Paul doesn't stop here. That doesn't make him slow down because he says, "He who steals, let him steal no longer." Whether this is read out loud or not, that doesn't change anything. This is a command, "You shall not steal."

It's a little hard for us to understand today because we don't live in a third world country like the Ephesians did, but stealing was very common for them because they lived in a poor place. It was a very major problem because the people were desperate; they were starving. Some of them had to steal in order to survive, especially the slaves. It was a constant problem for enslaved people. They would take whatever they could get their hands on. And so as a result of this, Paul says, "He who steals must steal no longer."

If you notice, he goes on to say not only must you not steal, but you need to labour, performing with his own hands what is good, and share with those who have need. So not only do you not steal, but you need to share. This is how great the change needs to be. Not only do you stop taking what doesn't belong to you, but you need to do the opposite and give it back. You steal because you don't think you have enough, right? You steal because you think you really need that piece of bread or that money or whatever it is. But to start giving back is a totally different thing entirely, right? You need to put off the sin and put on the righteous act. And just to show you the danger of this one. You know, we may not seem like the Ephesians did, but we're not better than them. We still steal in our own way in a much more polite way.

We plagiarize normally. People plagiarize all the time; they steal ideas, Wikipedia, the internet, things like that. We take ideas, people's ideas and don't give credit for them. We steal time from our employees. There's a name for that. It's called time theft, very serious thing. People steal each other's identity, we just talked about that. They steal each other's answers at school; there have been studies done to say cheating in school has become greater than it's ever been. we steal from the government by lying on our T-1 form; lying about our taxes. We could go on and on with this.

But Paul's point is you can't do that anymore either as a Christian. You can't steal because you've changed. You're a new man. In fact, that's the point in all of this. That's what he's saying all

throughout this passage. You got to stop doing these things because God has made you new. Remember, this is all about God. This is all about what He has done in your life. And Paul says if He's done something in your life, if He has saved you, this is what it looks like.

Warren Wiersbe, the New Testament scholar, said that “Nothing paralyzes our lives like the attitude that things never change.” We need to stop thinking that way. We need to stop talking like that because we serve a God who changes things, Amen. We serve a God who makes all things new, including us. God doesn't just change our circumstances, He changes us. God doesn't just change the situation we're in, He changes who we are, and we need to act accordingly.

Which leads me to ask this question this morning. Have you experienced this? Have you experienced this kind of change? Has God made you new? Do you still lie like you used to? Do you still get angry like you used to? Do you still steal like you're used to? I'm not asking “Are you perfect?” I'm just asking, “Has there been a change?” Maybe yes, you still get angry but not like you once did. I ask you that because if you don't see that it's a serious thing. It may be a sign that your lost. If you're saved, this changes you.

To ask us another way and get real personal here, you know if you lie, what do you lie about? If you get if you steal, what do you steal? If you get angry, what do you get angry about? If I did ask you to fill out that Journal of Upsets? What would you put down? Seven o'clock Wednesday morning, this is what made me mad. Nine o'clock Thursday night, this is what made me mad. Well, what would you say? I ask you that because I know if you fill out that assignment and you sit down and talk with me about it, I know you would say this, you would say, “Whatever it was that made me angry, was not worth it. It was stupid; it was foolish because God has forgiven me of so much. He's pardoned me of so many sins, and there's no way I couldn't pardon everyone else.” Friends, we have to change in these areas. We have to be different, but we do it remembering what Christ has done for us.

The story is told at the time a man showed up at a revival in the States. He showed up at a one of those big tent crusades, and as it was going on, he stood up to tell everyone, “I'm a Christian today and I'm standing on redemption ground.” He just announced that to everybody for all to hear. And a lot of people were impressed until another man stood up and said, “You know, I'm a Christian too. I want to tell you that. And I want to also tell you that man is not standing on redemption ground. He's standing in a pair of shoes he stole from my store this week. Arrest that man.” There's a lesson there. There's a principle and the principle is this: you can't stand in two things at once. You can't stand on redemption ground and stand in sin. You've got to choose one of the other. Paul is calling for you to make a choice in this passage. He's calling for you to make a decision to live like Christ has saved you. Will you do that today? Will you live like you're changed and different? Let me pray that you would. Let's have a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we've come to a sobering piece of Your word this morning. I don't think we could ever about any sin and not say, "That's me in this passage. I do that." And on one hand, it leaves us crushed. We're humbled. But on the other hand, we read the first part of this passage and we remember what You have done for sin. So Lord, I pray that and I say that. Lord, I just ask that no one would leave this morning crushed. Maybe they're crushed, but that they would remember what You've said in the beginning and take hope and be encouraged.

Lord, thank You that we have a Saviour that defeated sin. Thank You that we have a Lord that defeated all lying and anger and stealing and whatever it is. He's our hope. He's the one we trust in and we don't trust in ourselves. We trust in You.

Lord, I do also pray for any who are here this morning who aren't saved. I don't know where everyone's at with You this morning. But if there are any here who are lost, Lord, and they don't understand the first part of this passage. It doesn't apply to them because they don't believe it, that you would draw them to the Saviour. Lord, thank You that we have a Saviour for every sin. We have a Saviour for every sinner and may any who are lost today, come to Christ for salvation.

We thank You for this time together. We're so encouraged to be together as a church, and we pray that You would bless us as we go out to live out this passage of Scripture. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.