

Ephesians Week 8
4:17-32
Summary

Summary of Text

Paul continues his direction for how Christians are to live moving from the issue of unity and diversity to more concrete moral imperatives. He begins by describing how the Pagan nations around the churches live. In summary, they have rejected God which has led to a darkness of mind which leads to a callousness of heart which leads to works of immorality.

These Gentile Christians are not to live that way any longer because that is not how they learned of Christ. In fact, they have learned the truth of Jesus which calls them to no longer walk in the way they formerly did. Instead, rather than being darkened, their minds are being renewed by the Spirit. They are to put off the old self and put on the new self. This, of course, is an on-going imperative; we are always taking off the old and putting on the new. The new self is defined by God himself and so they are to be holy and righteous in the truth.

This leads to Paul's even more specific moral imperatives:

Put off the old self 'Vice'	Put on the new self 'Virtue'
Do not lie to the community	Speak the truth to the neighbour because, we are members of one body (unity) Quote from Zechariah 8:16 - what does the redeemed community look like after the covenant God rescues it?
Do not sin (in anger)	Be angry (limited in scope and time) because, if we hold onto anger it can turn into bitterness and sin. Tied to giving up our rights for the sake of unity; allowing ourselves to be wronged. Psalm 4:4 allowing God to vindicate.
Do not steal - take from others	Work in order to share - give to others
Do not use unwholesome speech	Speak to edify and give grace
Remove all 'rage'	Love each other in a Christ-like way

Application

In a model of Christianity where salvation is about me as an individual this doesn't seem to have much to say. But, in a model of Christianity where salvation has an all of creation scope where the Church is God's agent (image) in the world, to the world and for the world, this has much application. To be saved is to be called into the community called the church. And, this is how we are to live; this is our community rule. We are to submit ourselves to the Spirit for the sake of the community which is for the sake of the world's redemption.

The above vice and virtue list tells us how to interact. We are to be honest with each other rather than lie for our own advantage. We should be angry with injustice and seek reconciliation with each other, but if we can't manage it we must commit the offence to God trusting he will

make things right and we must not harbour anger or resentment from the offending party. We need to change from thinking in terms of what I can get from others and begin thinking in terms of what I can share with others. We need to ensure that the way and the content of our speech with each other is not only true but will build up the community and lead to God's grace in the lives of those who hear us. We are to give up the domination of others through power and instead live and love in humility like Christ.

Discussion

Steve reminded us that to be truthful with each other we need to commit to a new level of honesty. We need to reject the contemporary culture that answers 'everything is good or fine' when asked how things are. Instead, we need to truthfully say when things are bad or difficult or a struggle.

I also made the point that we have been empowered to live this out. Paul and God have not given us an impossible standard to live up to. We have been empowered by the Spirit to live in community in this way. An important starting point to doing so is to recognize it as so contra to much preaching and theology. Important to this is that it is an on-going process of growing into maturity and based on forgiveness and reconciliation which themselves are acts in line with what Paul and God are saying in Ephesians.