

Three Opposites

The balance of Ephesians four (verses 28-32) consists of three opposites in attitude and conduct, resulting from one crucifying the "old man" and adorning himself with the "new man."

"Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the things that is good that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need" (4:28). There could hardly be a greater contrast set forth for us to emulate than this one. The object of the thief is self-interest; running "rough shod" over the well being of others. Jesus put it this way: *"The thief cometh not for but to steal and kill and destroy: I am come that they may have life, and may have it abundantly"* (Jn. 10:10). The thief does not care to work to secure his need; he has scorn for such that do and makes them the victims off which he preys. In Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan, the thief there is pictured as not only taking the man's substance; he beat him and left him half dead in the process (Luke 10). But enters the new man! Rather than scorning work, he is not ashamed to labor, to work with his own hands. He engages in honorable labor however lowly and demeaning it may appear to be to the proud. And the purpose for which he labors is to fill not only his needs but to have sufficient should perchance others, having fallen into evil times, might be helped by the funds he has earned himself.

"Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear" (Eph. 4:29). The tongue is a little member which boasts great things (Jam. 3:2). James also said, *"Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire. And the tongue is a fire; the world of iniquity among our members, which defileth the whole body and setted on fire the wheel of nature is is set on fire by hell"* (Jam. 3:6). Although Jesus had more in mind than just what the mouth spoke -- He was concerned about the heart which caused the mouth to speak. He warned, *"Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which procedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man"* (Mt. 15:11). So here, Paul spoke of "corrupt speech" rotten speech, speech which not only has already contaminated the man who utters it, but corrupts the hearer as well. How different the speech of the new man! His language is designed to edify -- to build up those who hear; to give grace to them that hear. *"A word spoken in due season, how good it is"* (Pro. 15:23)! Truly we should pray, *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Jehovah my Rock and my Redeemer"* (Psa.19:14)! Paul puts it this way: *"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer one another"* (Col. 4:6).

"Let all bitterness, and wrath and anger and clamor and railing be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Eh. 4:31). Of these six items to *"put away,"* four are necessarily "heart matters" which may result in action. Two of these are tongue matters: clamor and railing. To put on the *"new man,"* Paul reflects will resolve the cancerous heart and evil tongue of the old man. To add kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness transforms the old man into one who walks after Christ. Amid this exportations of things to put off or on, comes this added one: *"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God in which ye were sealed unto the day of redemption"* (4:30). The sins of men grieve our God who made us. In the ancient world as man grew steadily worse: *"It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him in his heart"* (Gen. 6:6). Our Savior was likewise grieved because of the hardness of the hearts of His people (Mk. 3:5). So, let us put on the *"new man"* for such is certain to please our Lord and Master!

Jim McDonald