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## **“A New Year. The New Life. Ephesians Chapter 4 v 17-32**

### *The New Life*

*<sup>17</sup> Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. <sup>19</sup> They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practise every kind of impurity. <sup>20</sup> But that is not the way you learned Christ!— <sup>21</sup> assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, <sup>22</sup> to put off your old self,<sup>[e]</sup> which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

*<sup>25</sup> Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another. <sup>26</sup> Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and give no opportunity to the devil. <sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. <sup>29</sup> Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

Here we are at the beginning of another new year. At such a time it is good to look back over the one just finished, yes, it was in many ways a turbulent year, and one that we will feel the effects of for some time to come. On the other hand, we thank our God and Saviour that He has been in control. In many ways, often beyond our understanding, our God has been guiding and directing not just our lives here in Broadstone, but nationally and internationally as well.



Given how blessed we have been in 2024 we can look forward with eager anticipation of the blessings we will receive from the Lord in the year that lies ahead.

Undoubtedly there will be times of difficulty **BUT GOD** will be there to walk or carry us through them. How can we be so positive about this? Hebrews Chapter 13 v 5 & 6 contains Jesus' promise *"I will never leave you nor forsake you"*. So, we can confidently say, *"The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*. This is a promise that God will not break. He sees and knows everything about us, all our difficulties, trials and tribulations. He is prepared long before they have their effect on us, that means He is already alongside us when they happen.

This could be deemed as flying on autopilot; however, autopilot is something that adjusts to what is happening as the flight progresses. Therefore, as our wonderful Saviour knows the end from the beginning, we should think of it as part of His perfect plan for us who trust in Him and His love of and for us.

Paul, in this second half of chapter four contrasted the way of the Gentiles and that of the Christians as the difference between darkness and light. He put particular emphasis on the change of attitudes caused by the indwelling of Christ. Christ in us evokes changed actions, particularly verbal ones noted here. Rather than giving vent to our natural drives when confronted by opposing parties.

Paul says to begin and to continue relationships from a position of forgiveness. Such an approach more likely to assure smoothness and longevity of relationships. The Christ whom believers know teaches them to put off the old self of sin which characterised their former life.

On a TV programme the other evening a film producer was talking about his latest offering, a so-called predictive film entitled "2072" and his view of the chaos that will be in place by then, with democracies resigned to history etc etc. Sadly, the only resolution to the problem not mentioned, (probably he thought it wouldn't do his film's future any good) was that of restoring our God and Saviour to His rightful place on the throne of the world's hearts.

Paul was emphasising that Christian unity in Christ's body develops as we trust one another with the truth, rather than trying to compliment, appease, flatter, or fool one another. The love of Christ leads us to love and trust one another, seeking to mature together in Christ.

The anger referred to us in verse 26 is a response to disappointment, frustration, blocked plans, or personal putdowns that happen from time to time in most Christian homes. Anger can either be buried inside oneself or expressed in attacking the one toward whom anger is directed. Neither of these approaches is a Christian way of handling anger. The positive approach is to resolve anger so that it will not build up to an explosion or poison the inner being by becoming resentment.

Thus, Paul advised Christians to recognise their anger, deal with the issues that caused it, and resolve it before going to bed. When anger is internalised and stored up, it becomes resentment, which gives opportunity for the devil to work in one's heart. Prayer to God and open communication with other people help us to resolve anger.

We see from verse 28 (*<sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.*) that God's grace incorporates even thieves into his church. Thieves seek to gain financial resources without working. God calls them to do the honourable thing by working to produce honest proceeds that can be used to help those in need. Human work is not simply a way to gain personal riches. It is a way to help the community as a whole including the poor.

Verse 32 (*<sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*) is a fitting end to this very pointed chapter, with a note of pleading in Paul's pen, he instructs the readers that Christians are to forgive each other as God in Christ has forgiven them. That the forgiving grace of God which we have received puts us under obligation to treat others just as God has treated us. Let us think of any situation in the light of the fact that God's grace has not truly done its work in us until we respond in grace to others about us.

*Transcript of the presentation given by Deacon Rodney Burge and discussed at the church-based, morning home group on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025. All scripture is from the ESV Translation.*