

Let's read from **Ephesians**: **Chapter. 4. vs:10-13** NLT

Paul wants to see ... growing maturity in the Church
So he **explains** ... that Apostles, Prophets,
Evangelists, Pastors, & Teachers,
All need to be servants, of this young church,
Teaching, both: **Servant-hood & Self-control.**

Remember ... in the Epistle of **James**,
We talked about a **cork**, floating in the sea.
Though we added: **a sail, a rudder & centreboard**
It made no difference !
Because ... With no hand on the tiller steering it.
It was tossed about, by every wave, & gust of wind.

Similarly... When our young grandson Matthew,
Was taken to the beach ... He jumped out of the car,
& rushed into the water, **with great excitement.**
But was immediately **knocked over**, by a wave !
Both ... **surprised, & frightened**,
He wouldn't go back in the water, all day.

v14 (in NIV) says: **Then we will no longer be infants**
tossed back & forth by the waves,
& blown here & there, by every wind of teaching.

**We need to be ‘strong’ ~ and ‘mature’ ~ in our faith.
So ~ we won’t be like small children ~ at the seaside**

To clarify the purpose, of his illustration:

Paul says ... **The ‘Spiritual’... wind and waves,**
come from: **cunning and crafty men**, using **deception**
to promote **their misinterpretation** of the Christian faith.

Our New Living Translation, describes the problem,
like this: **Because someone has cleverly lied to us
and made the lie ~ sound like the truth. (v.14b)**

**Paul’s not talking about: a mistake,
or an error of judgement !**

**He means: False Apostles, are carefully planning:
Their **takeover** ~ and willing to use **any tactics**,
That seem: **Convincing - Important - & Powerful !****

The Greek text (in v14) uses the word for a dice.

People who use ‘a loaded dice’

Know exactly what they’re doing.

They’re **secretly planning**:

‘Heads I win ~ and tails you lose’

They're working to a **private agenda**,
Manipulating unsuspecting people.
Their tools are **half truths & highly emotive language**

While Paul's not aware, of such teachers arriving in
Ephesus ...YET ! They'd certainly been in Galatia.
To the **Galatians**, he wrote:

You are already following a different way that pretends
to be the Good News, but is **not** the Good News at all.
You are being **fooled** by those who twist and change
the truth, concerning Christ. Gal.1. Vs 6b &7, NLT

He wants the **Ephesians** to be forewarned !
Wolves in sheep's clothing ~ are coming.
They're **false Apostles**, coming with a **false gospel** !

Over the hills to the East ~ was the city of Colossae.
Paul had similar concerns for them, he says:

Don't let anyone lead you astray,
with empty philosophy, & high sounding nonsense
that comes from human thinking,
& from the evil powers of this world,
and not from Christ. Col. 2.v8. NLT

Does all this sound like ~ ‘the ancient past’.
& a bit ‘**over the top**’ ?

In some parts of the Christian church today,
We still find: ‘Pirates’ - ‘Bounty hunters’ - & people,
who’ll mix truth and error ~ to their own advantage.

They crave **importance** and **wealth** !

They often call it ‘**God’s blessing**’

And say: ‘**God is Prospering them**’ !

Of course, there’s nothing wrong ~ with those terms.
But **they, miss-apply them**, to their own wily schemes.

These people are **real**, & still around in **today’s world**.
So I’ve chosen, just two examples, from the past.

1^{stly} About 1958, A man calling himself:
A ‘**Divine Healer**’ ... travelled through NZ.
Holding meetings in the four main centres,
And in many rural towns.

He openly said: he’d come: ‘**take up an offering**’
Meaning **to collect money** for his work in other places
Since ~ he had no ministry, in NZ.

He'd simply come here ~ to 'reap'

He said 'People couldn't honour God with loose change
Paper money ~ was more honouring to God'

He finally left NZ with 20,000 pounds !

Enough money back then, to buy about ten houses.

2^{ndly} in 1970, When I was a missionary, in the Solomons.
God blessed with a huge number of nominal Christians
coming in repentance, to get their lives sorted out !

Somebody, published news articles in Australia & NZ.
Saying: '**Revival has broken out**' in the Solomon's.
Very soon we had an influx of Christian leaders,
all wanting part of the action !

Two came from America ~ one from New Guinea,
And another from the little Island of Guam.

Generally ~ they contacted the local Church leaders,
Not the missionaries ~ offering 'their help'

What they really meant was:

They wanted to 'help themselves'

Within two weeks of his arrival,
The man from Guam, was **deported again.**
For **lying** to the Immigration Dept.

The others, formed '**breakaway Churches**'
with themselves, as the leader. ~ They'd portrayed
themselves, as genuinely wanting to help.

Only later, did their true intentions, And their:
'**odd ball theology**' come out in the open.

By the time we realised, we'd been deliberately fed
'Half Truths' ... the damage was already done.

BUT ... Let's not lose sight of the Ephesians,
Paul's message **to them, and to us** is that:
a good understanding of God's truth is **essential**.
Before ~ we can recognise ~ '**false teaching**'

Our faith must be an **active part** of our everyday lives

Read: vs 14,15,16

v16. says: **The whole body is fitted together perfectly**
As each part does its own special work,

In **1 Corinthians.12**. Paul uses a similar illustration,
Making his point, **in a humorous way**: (vs.14-20)

He says:

Yes the body has many different parts, not just one part

If the foot says,

“I am not part of the body, because I am not a hand”
that does not make it any less, a part of the body.

And if the ear says, “I am not part of the body
because I am only an ear, and not an eye”

Would that make it any less, a part of the body ?

Suppose the whole body were an eye,
then how would you hear ?

Or if your whole body were just one big ear,
how could you smell anything ?

We can sense a ripple of laughter ~ as they picture:
That huge Ear or **The big Eye** ~ **staring at them !**

Paul wants to **emphasise** the importance,
of our **Inter-dependence** on one another.

Because he knows:

That if one person in a church,

Is openly sinning ~ it'll become contagious,
and others will be infected !

Like any good parent, he wants to see:
Healthy growth and development
In his Spiritual children.

Coming back to: Verse.14:

Then we will no longer be like children
forever changing our minds about **what we believe.**

verses 17,18,19 say:

With the Lord's authority let me say this:
Live no longer as the ungodly do,
for they are hopelessly **confused.**

Their closed minds are full of darkness,
They are far away from the life of God,
because they have **shut their minds,**
and hardened their hearts against him.

They don't care any more, about right and wrong,
and they have given themselves over to immoral ways.

Why was their '**clever thinking**'... so wrong ?

Because ... it was only about: **self indulgence.**

Paul is saying to the Ephesian Christians:
**‘You’ve grown up in this culture,
And you know the customs ... of these people !
But now... that you’ve trusted Christ,
There are parts of this culture ~ you need to reject.’**

We see from his preaching, in the book of Acts,
Paul accepted the fact,
That some people ~ **sinned in ignorance**.
Because they didn’t distinguish between right & wrong
And, because they’d never been taught, any other way.

vs.18 &19. Tell us that many people had refused to
Listen, & Rejected, any criticism of their lifestyle.

What seems like an ‘old fashioned’ term:

‘Hardened their hearts’ (v18)

Emphasises ~ **that they did have a choice !**
But, **they knowingly chose evil** ~ instead of good
And they’d done this ~ repeatedly !

The **“rotteness”** of some of the culture they lived in,
Couldn’t be ... ‘whitewashed’ ~ or ‘glossed over’
Because, it had predictable **consequences !**

To disregard its seriousness,
 Was to risk, being ensnared by it.
 As you know:

Our character is developed, by the choices we make.

But ... our character, is not: 'static'

It's being: **progressively developed**, by our choices
 When we choose what's **right**, then, with God's help,
 We can be radically changed ~ **by our new choices !**

The more we choose God's way, the easier it becomes
 The more we choose to ignore God's way,
 And follow our own way, by **hardening our hearts**
 The more difficult it becomes to change & reform !

Paul's purpose in writing to the Ephesians,
 Was to **encourage them**, to walk in God's ways.

Let's read vs 19b – 24.

Their **old ways** ~ must be '**thrown off**'
 Like taking off ~ dirty clothes !
 And **new ways** '**put on**' ~ like putting on new clothes.

But ~ it's much more than just: '**a token makeover**.

It's a whole new **understanding**: of **right from wrong**
Of what's **Godly, & appropriate** ~ and what's **not** !

Christians throughout history,
have had this same problem ~ namely:

What parts of the culture I live in ~ are **sinful**,
Or ~ **inappropriate** ~ for me as a Christian ?
And **how** am I going to make changes for the better ?
Without **seeming to be** 'superior, & proud of it'

From **v25**,

Paul starts to spell out some points of application,
Both negative and positive.

1^{stly} v.25 So put away all falsehood,
And 'tell your neighbour the truth'
because we belong to each other.

I'm sure you've noticed, the change of attitude to **lying**.
'Honesty & Integrity' are now called '**old fashioned**' !

Recently in a Herald article, about '**employment**'
It mentioned: How often the 'facts' in a CV,
are embellished with lies ~ inserting 'false facts'
to get ahead of, the other applicants !

This also happened when the Maori TV station,
Hired a new Chief Executive...

They overlooked checking his CV properly.

When he didn't seem to know what to do.

Someone checked ... more thoroughly.

His CV claimed he had a certain Degree,

But it wasn't true ... and He was fired !

2^{ndly} vs26,27: (v26 quotes Psalm.4.v4,)

And don't sin, by letting anger gain control over you,
Don't let the Sun go down, while you are still angry,
For anger gives a mighty foothold to the Devil.

To paraphrase these verses:

Going to bed in a 'black mood' & sulking, can lead
To unbalanced planning to '**get even**' tomorrow.

Notice ... Paul doesn't say: '**never be angry**'

Jesus was angry ... with the money changers,
and merchants at the Temple ... Why ?

Because they were **robbing** the worshipers,
by charging excessive prices !

But **no one** would suggest, that a mark of Jesus ministry, was going around, being **angry**.

3^{rdly} (read v28)

Recently there's been '**bag snatching**' in Auckland. A lady leaving the Shopping Mall, gets into her car and puts her things, on the passenger seat.

But, while she's looking behind ~ to back out, the passenger door is wrenched open, and her handbag is stolen !

All she sees, are jeans & a hoodie, disappearing through the cars !

Paul is concerned that these 'new Christians' don't continue to behave, as they did, Before ~ they were Christians.

He says 'Get a job' to provide for yourself, and have something to share with others in need !

He's challenging ~ 'laziness' & delaying tactics (not unemployment problems)

v29: Don't use foul or abusive language,
let everything you say, be good and helpful,
so that your words will be an **encouragement**
to those who hear them.

v25: **lies**, v26: **anger**, v28: **stealing**, v29: **bad language**,

Put off: all these thing ~ so you'll be able to,

Put on: a full uniform ~ **of new attitudes**. V22 - 24.

Finally, in the last three verses, He says:

V30: **And do not** bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit
by the way you live ...Remember:
He is the one who has identified you as his own,
Guaranteeing you will be saved,
on the day of redemption.

Sometimes, we might think, the Holy Spirit,
was not really known about, until the Day of Pentecost.
But the H/S is mentioned many times in the OT.

For example: **Isaiah 63.10**, (written about 700 years BC)

He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old,
Yet ~ they rebelled ~ and grieved His Holy Spirit.

We **grieve** the Holy Spirit,
When our **rebellious attitude** says:
I know ~ what's best for me !
So ~ why do I have to do things - God's way ?

The word for 'grieve' is a **love and respect** word.
Maybe, we **grieved our parents**, by what we **did**.
Or, maybe we've **been grieved ourselves**,
by what our children have done,
And we say: **'That's not how I brought them up' !**

- v31. **Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger,
harsh words, & slander.**
As well as all types of malicious behaviour.
- v32. **Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted,
forgiving one another,
just as God through Christ has forgiven you.**

Reading about all this,
And understanding what to do, is the easy part.
But applying it, every day.

Takes an 'ongoing' conscious effort ...
**And a trusting belief ... in God's goodness,
& God's guidance ... & His power, to help us.**