

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XCIX : PRACTICAL INJUNCTIONS ABOUT THE OLD AND NEW LIFE (4:25-5:2)

## **Ephesians 4:25** —

*Wherefore put away lying and speake every man truth vnto his neighbour for as moche as we are members one of another.* (Tyndale's New Testament, 1534)

*Wherefore cast off lying, and speake euery man truth vnto his neighbour: for we are members one of another.* (Geneva Bible, 1599)

*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.* (King James Version, 1769)

*Wherefore, putting away the lying, speak truth each with his neighbour, because we are members one of another;* (Young's Literal Translation, 1898)

*Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.* (Revised Version, 1885)

*Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.* (American Standard Version, 1901)

*Therefore, putting away falsehood, let every one speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.* (Revised Standard Version, 1952)

*Wherefore, having put off the lie once for all, be speaking truth each with his neighbor, because we are members belonging to one another.* (Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation, 1961)

*Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.* (New King James Version, 1982)

*Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.* (New American Standard Version, 1995)

*Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.* (New International Version, 2011)

*Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.* (English Standard Version, 2016)

Διὸ ἀποθέμενοι τὸ ψεῦδος λαλεῖτε ἀλήθειαν ἕκαστος μετὰ τοῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων μέλη (Stephanus Greek NT, 1550)

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## **Lying**

**negatively ...**

**positively ...**

**motivational clause**

<sup>25</sup> *Therefore, having put away falsehood, ...*     *... let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, ...*     *... for we are members one of another.*

## **v. 25** — **CONNECTED TO THE PREVIOUS SECTION** — **‘Wherefore, therefore, for this reason’** — Διὸ [dio]

— Paul starts with the conjunction *‘therefore...’*, connecting these admonitions with the previous section. Truth and falsehood was mentioned in vv. 21, 22 and 24. The word Paul uses here for *‘putting away’* is a form of the same verb in v. 22, *‘put off.’* Having just discussed that we had *‘put off’* (negatively) the old man and had *‘put on’* (positively) the new man, Paul now gives concrete examples to follow on the general principles, the first being *‘put away lying’* (negatively) and replace that with *‘speaking the truth’* (positively). **“Putting on the new self involves getting rid of certain evil practices and replacing them with godly virtues. Changed behavior will flow out of one’s new identity in Christ. Calvin puts it well when he says, ‘from the righteousness of the new man, all godly exhortations flow, like streams from a spring.’”** [Arnold, 299; see also Best, 445; Lincoln, 300; O’Brien, 336f; Hoehner, 615; Eadie, 346; Muddiman, 224; Snodgrass, 248; Hodge, 194; Robinson, 154]

**HOW IS THIS BEST TRANSLATED? — ‘putting away the lying, having put off the lie once for all’ — ἀποθέμενοι τὸ ψεῦδος [apothemenoi to pseudos]** — As we will see throughout this exhortation passage, there are differences of opinion as to how these should be translated (or considered in a different way, what was Paul’s original emphasis?). In this first admonition, Paul uses an aorist participle (*‘put off’*) along with *‘lie’* (singular) with the definite article. Taken in its most strict sense, Kenneth Wuest translates this as follows:

*‘Wherefore, having put off the lie once for all, be speaking truth each with his neighbor, because we are members belonging to one another.’* (Kenneth Wuest’s Expanded Translation, 1961)

This would be a permissible translation and Paul would thus be referring back to our salvation as mentioned in v. 22 (the Greek word in v. 25 is the same word, tense and voice as that in v. 22; see our notes on that verse). Understood in that sense, the meaning would be *‘Having put away the (great) lie of a life alienated from God (cf. 4.18) you are now to tell the truth, each one with his neighbour’*. [Muddiman, 224] “It is possible, however, that Paul has used the aorist participle here instead of the present imperative because he wishes to retain some of his characteristic tension between the indicative and imperative (see the previous discussion on the use of the infinitives for *‘take off’* and *‘put on’*). If so, the Ephesians have already taken off falsehood and put on truth by receiving the message of truth (1:13) and by entering a relationship with Christ, in whom *‘there is truth’* (4:21b).” [Arnold, 299f]

Against that emphasis however is almost every commentator I have read along with the overwhelming majority of the translations:

*‘put away lying’* (Tyndale’s NT)

*‘cast off lying’* (Geneva Bible)

*‘putting away lying’* (KJV, NKJV)

*‘putting away the lying’* (YLT)

*‘putting away falsehood’* (RV, ASV, RSV)

*‘laying aside falsehood’* (NASV)

*‘each of you must put off falsehood’* (NIV)

*‘having put away falsehood’* (ESV; note this follows the aorist sense of the participle but takes the singular *‘lie’* to refer to falsehood)

Those knowledgeable in the Greek language states this participle is to be understood *‘imperatively’* (*‘as a command’*), giving these examples of this usage (the underlined portions being the exact same word as used here in Ephesians; see Best, 445; Lincoln, 300; O’Brien, 337; Muddiman, 224; Snodgrass, 249):

*‘Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking’* (1 Pet 2:1 NKJV)

*‘Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us’* (Heb 12:1 NKJV)

The parallel passage in Col 3:9 actually uses the same word as a command except in the present tense:

*‘Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds’* (Col 3:9 NKJV)

As explained by the commentators, translating this as a command is consistent with the pattern exhibited through this passage of a negative command followed by a positive command (4:28, 29, 31-32). Clinton Arnold also notes the following: “Also, on the only other occasion in Paul’s writings when an aorist participle in the nominative case precedes an imperative verb, the participle is commonly interpreted as imperatival (see 2 Tim 4:11).” [Arnold, 299] “Apothemi, from which laying aside is derived, has to do with discarding, stripping off, casting away, and the like. It is the word Luke used of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem who, as they were stoning Stephen, *‘laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul’* (Acts 7:58). They laid aside their outer garments so they could more freely do their wicked work. The Christian lays aside falsehood so he can be free to do the righteous work of the Lord.” [MacArthur, 183]

**‘lying, falsehood’ — τὸ ψεῦδος [to pseudos]** — Since Paul follows this with the exhortation to speak the truth, this is most often understood as *‘the practice or habit of lying, falsehood, that which is not genuine or real.’* [Best, 445; Arnold, 300; Hoehner, 616] Commentators note the singular is frequently used collectively for *‘lies.’* [Lincoln, 300; O’Brien, 337] In the LXX this word occurs thirty-one times and in the canonical books it appears twenty-five times. It translates four Hebrew words, nine times from the Hebrew word meaning *‘false’* (Jer 3:10, 23; 37:14), *‘falsehood’* (Isa 28:15; Jer 9:3), *‘swear falsely’* (Zech 5:4; Mal 3:5), or *‘lie’* (Isa 44:20; Jer 43:2; Mic 2:11). In the NT it appears ten times, four times in Paul (Rom 1:25; Eph 4:25; 2 Thess 2:9, 11). [Hoehner, 615] “Using this word, the Scriptures have much to say about falsehood. John states that the devil from the beginning has had nothing to do with truth because there is no truth in him; according to his own nature he lies, for he is the father of lies (John 8:44). Further John states that no lie is of the truth; they are antithetical (1 John 2:21, 27). Revelation 14:5 states that the 144,000 will be pure and no lie will be found in them. In the same book John states that no one who practices abomination or falsehood will enter the coming age (Rev 21:27; 22:15). Paul agrees in Rom 1:25 where he depicts a sinful person as one who has

exchanged the truth of God for a lie. In addition, he speaks of the future lawless one who will give false wonders which will be believed by the people in that day (2 Thess 2:9, 11). Hence, in all contexts this word is used as the antithesis of truth.” [Hoehner, 615]

**‘LIARS WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD’** — Lying and speaking the truth goes back to the Decalogue and was continually emphasized in Judaism (e.g., Prov 4:24; 6:19). “*The psalmist declares that the Lord destroys ‘those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the LORD abhors’ (Ps 5:6). Later in Ephesians, Paul will list knowing the truth and telling the truth as an essential part of the believer’s struggle against the devil (6:14). This is because Satan does not hold ‘to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies’ (John 8:44).*” [Arnold, 300] “*A lie is a statement that is contrary to fact, spoken with the intent to deceive. If I tell you it is noon, and then discover that my watch is wrong, I did not tell a lie. But if I gave you the wrong time so you would be late to a meeting and I would benefit from it, that would be a lie. Satan is a liar (John 8:44), and he wants us to believe that God is a liar. ‘Yea, hath God said?’ (Gen. 3:1). Whenever we speak truth, the Spirit of God works, but whenever we tell a lie, Satan goes to work. We like to believe that we help people by lying to them, but such is not the case. We may not see the sad consequences immediately, but ultimately they will come. ‘Ye know that no lie is of the truth’ (1 John 2:21). Hell is prepared for ‘whosoever loveth and maketh a lie’ (Rev. 22:15). This does not mean that anybody who ever told a lie will go to hell, but rather that those whose lives are controlled by lies — they love lies and they make lies — are lost forever. The Christian’s life is controlled by truth.*” [Weirsbe, 40f] “*Liars will not inherit the kingdom of God. ‘For the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death’ (Rev. 21:8; cf. 1 Cor. 6:9). A believer can fall into lying just as he can fall into any sin, but if his life is a habitual flow of lies that proceed from a heart that seeks to deceive, he has no biblical basis for believing he is a Christian. The person who continually lies as a regular part of his daily living shows himself to be a child of Satan not of God (John 8:44). Satan lies about God, Christ, life, death, heaven, hell, Scripture, good, evil, and everything else. Every religious system apart from Christianity is built around various deceptions of Satan. Even the few and limited truths that may be found in human religions are scheming parts of a greater network that seeks to deceive. Ever since the Fall, lying has been a common characteristic of unregenerate mankind.... Lying includes more than simply telling direct falsehoods. It also includes exaggeration, adding falsehood to that which begins as true. Some years ago a Christian man became widely known for his powerful and moving testimony. But after several years he stopped. When asked why, he replied with some degree of integrity, ‘Over the years I embellished the story so much that I no longer knew what was true and what was not.’ Cheating in school and on income tax returns is a form of lying. Making foolish promises, betraying a confidence, flattery, and making excuses are all forms of lying. The Christian should have no part of any kind of lying. He is to be characterized by laying aside falsehood, because falsehood is incompatible with his new nature and unacceptable to his new Lord.*” [MacArthur, 182f]

**PAUL SUPPORTS HIS DEMAND FOR TRUTHFULNESS BY QUOTING THE OT** — **speaking truth each with his neighbour,** — λαλεῖτε ἀλήθειαν ἕκαστος μετὰ τοῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ [laleite alētheian hekastos meta tou plēsion autou] — Paul quotes from Zech 8:16 LXX with a very minor alteration:

*‘These are the things you shall do: **Speak each man the truth to his neighbor;** give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace; let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; and do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate, says the Lord.’ (Zech 8:16,17 NKJV)*

This was also quoted word-for-word from the LXX in a first-century Jewish writing along with a warning against anger:

*‘**Speak truth each one with his neighbour.** So shall ye not fall into wrath and confusion; But ye shall be in peace, having the God of peace, So shall no war prevail over you.’ [Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs: The Testament of Dan, the Seventh Son of Jacob and Bilhah 5:2]*

It is interesting that in the Zechariah context God informs the remnant that he purposes to do good to Jerusalem and to Judah and the first command he utters to them is, ‘*Everyone one of you speak the truth to his neighbor.*’ Here in Ephesians, Paul likewise has this as his first command for the new person. [Hoehner, 616] In Ephesians a form of the word ‘truth’ appears seven times, six of these in chapters 4-6 and four of those six in this chapter (vv. 15, 21, 24, 25; cf. 5:9; 6:14).

**‘TRUTH’ IN ZECHARIAH** — There are six references to ‘truth’ in the prophecy of Zechariah. Apart from the admonition to God’s people in 7:9 to practice ‘true justice’ (lit. ‘justice of truth’), all the instances of ‘truth’ appear in chap. 8 (vv. 3, 8, 15, 16, and 19). “The new Jerusalem is to be the centre of divine revelation to which the nations will come in pilgrimage (vv. 20-23), in fulfilment of the expectations of Isa. 2:2-4. As God’s people heed the admonitions of vv. 16-19, their integrity will reflect the divine presence. The Gentiles’ reaction in the new age will be to repeat the old confession made by the Philistine Abimelech to Abraham, ‘God is with you’ (Gen. 21:22). The divine presence among the Lord’s renewed people is recognized by the Gentiles who come in pilgrimage to Zion.” [O’Brien, 337f] O’Brien continues by quoting T. Y. Neufeld (*Put On the Armour of God: The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians*, 133f), as making a number of important connections between Zech 8 and Eph 4, and asserts: ‘*It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the brief citation of Zech. 8.16 in Eph. 4.25 is but the tip of the iceberg in terms of the role Zech. 8 plays in the thought of the author of Ephesians.*’

**WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?** — In Zechariah 8:16 the neighbor is another Israelite; here it appears to be another Christian (‘for we are members of one another’). In Col 3:9 the avoidance of falsehood was simply based on the fact that the readers were

new people. [Best, 446; Lincoln, 300; O'Brien, 337; Bruce, 359; Eadie, 346f; Muddiman, 224f; Hodge, 194; Robinson, 154] The Greek word used here is an adverb meaning 'near, close by' and is typically translated 'neighbor' when used with the article. In the LXX it appears 162 times (218 including the Apocrypha) with the basic idea of 'to have dealing with someone,' whether that person be a friend (Ps 35:14), lover (Song of Sol 1:9, 15), or neighbor (Exod 11:2; Lev 19:16-18; 1 Sam 28:17; 2 Sam 12:11). Leviticus 19:18 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself,' is quoted in the NT nine times (Matt 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8). So while **primarily** the context is speaking to believers with one another, it is not **exclusively** Christians because the new person is to speak the truth at all times, even in his or her contacts with the unbelievers. **"Believers base their lifestyle on reality; there is no need to bring falsehood into any relationship whether with believers or unbelievers. This has already been addressed in 4:15 where believers are to be truthful in love, referring to both conduct and speech, so that the body can grow up to Christ."** [Hoehner, 616f] **"Christ is Himself 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (John 14:6); the Holy Spirit is 'the Spirit of truth' (v. 17); and God's Word is truth (17:17). When a person becomes a believer he steps out of the domain of falsehood into the domain of truth, and every form of lying therefore is utterly inconsistent with his new self."** [MacArthur, 183] "He characterizes the members of the community as one's 'neighbor'. This is determined, in part, by the fact that this entire clause is a quotation from Zech 8:16, which calls for the remnant of God's people to speak the truth 'to [one's] neighbor.' This is a prophetic text that looks forward to the time when God will dwell with the remnant of his people. In this eschatological setting, Jerusalem will be called 'the City of Truth' (8:3) after God has saved his people (8:13) and manifests his presence with them (8:23)." [Arnold, 300] **"Speak the truth to each other'** is the first of a series of admonitions (*"These are the things you are to do"*, v. 16) in the exhortatory section (vv. 16-19) of Zechariah 8, which follows immediately upon the divine promises regarding the new Jerusalem (vv. 1-15). The imperative of v. 16 is directed to the remnant of God's people. They will inhabit Zion, which will be called 'the City of Truth' because of the indwelling presence of Yahweh (v. 3). His people will be characterized by truth, righteousness, and holiness, and thus the *neighbour*, who is a member of this community, may expect to be dealt with truthfully. Ephesians 4:25 picks up this first exhortation and addresses it to the new community in Christ, the 'new man', that is created to be like God in 'righteousness and holiness of the truth'. Within this new society one's *neighbour* is a fellow-believer, who has a right to the truth. What is predicated of the eschatological future of God's people in terms of new Jerusalem language in the Old Testament passage is picked up by Paul in relation to the 'new person', God's new community in Christ, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." [O'Brien, 337f]

**PAUL'S EMPHASIS UPON THE INDIVIDUAL WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY** — Mention has already been made of the importance of truth within the Christian assembly but we must note the stress upon the individual within these communities to bear the truth with one another:

*'speak every man truth with his neighbour'* (Tyndale's NT, Geneva Bible, KJV)

*'speak truth each with his neighbour'* (YLT, Wuest's Expanded Translation)

*'speak ye truth each one with his neighbour'* (RV, ASV, NASV, NKJV, ESV)

*'let every one speak the truth with his neighbor'* (RSV)

**"Although this is a community responsibility, it must begin with each individual member. Thus Paul uses the distributive pronoun ἕκαστος [hekastos] to bring out individual responsibility."** [Arnold, 300; see also Hoehner, 616; O'Brien, 337]

**'BE IN THE HABIT OF SPEAKING THE TRUTH'** — The command (and it *is* a command!) to 'speak the truth' is in the present tense: we are to make a habit of speaking the truth; truthful speech should be an ongoing and characteristic pattern of the way believers talk. [Hoehner, 616; Arnold, 300] Paul is not writing a dissertation on when truth is necessary but stating a broad principle. [Best, 445]

**SPEAKING TRUTH DOES NOT DEMAND OUR TELLING EVERYTHING WE KNOW WITH NO REGARD OF ITS IMPACT** — "It should be said that telling the truth does not require telling everything we know. Truthfulness is not in conflict with keeping a confidence or other legitimate secrets. Everything we say should be unqualifiedly true, and to purposely withhold information in order to deceive and mislead is a form of lying. But truthfulness does not demand our telling everything we know with no regard for its impact. Nor does it demand that we unburden all our ill feelings, doubts, and hatreds on those whom we dislike — in the kind of pseudo-honesty promoted by Freudian psychology and other such philosophies. Our concern as Christians should be for God to deal with our wrong feelings and remove them, not to wantonly express them in some inept attempt at self-justification or in the misguided expectation that simply expressing them will somehow make them go away or will mend relationships they have caused to be broken. To readily admit as Paul did that we are not perfect or free of sin (Rom. 7:15-25; Phil. 4:12-14; etc.) is one thing; to broadcast detailed accounts of our sin is quite another." [MacArthur, 183f]

**THE MOTIVATION: COMMUNITY DIRECTED** — **because we are members belonging to one another** — ὅτι ἐσμέν ἀλλήλων μέλη [hoti esmen allēlōn melē] — **"In the next clause, Paul gives his main reason for eliminating lying and developing truthful speech. The way they talk to one another has significant implications for their life in community. They are 'members' of one another and belong to the one body of Christ (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:12-27). Paul could have based his appeal not to lie and to tell the truth on the very nature of God (who is truth; John 17:3; 1 Thess 1:9) or the fact that Christ is the truth (Eph 4:21b; cf. John 14:6). However, here he wants them to consider how foundational and indispensable trust is for the unity of the community as it builds itself up in love."** [Arnold, 300] **"Note the reason Paul gave for telling the truth: We belong to each other in Christ. He urged us to build the body in love (Eph. 4:16) and he urged us to build the body in truth."**

*'Speaking the truth in love' (Eph. 4:15). As 'members one of another' we affect each other, and we cannot build each other apart from truth. The first sin that was judged in the early church was the sin of lying (Acts 5:1-11)."* [Weirsbe, 41] *"In this body, which is a paradigm of harmonious human relationships, there is no room for lies which poison communication and breed suspicion instead of mutual trust. As Mackay puts it graphically, 'a lie is a stab into the very vitals of the body of Christ.'" [Lincoln, 301] "The means by which this body is built, according to 4:15, is speaking the truth of the gospel in love. Here at 4:25, the apostle's point is that, in the body which is a model of harmonious relationships, there is no place for anything other than the truth. We are 'no longer alienated, independent beings, but people who now belong together in unity with others whom we must not rob of the truth according to which they will decide and act'."* [O'Brien, 338]

**'MEMBER' USED OF THE BODY IS AN ORGANISM** — *"It is interesting to observe that this word is never used of members of an organization but always of members of an organism. In other words, members of an organization may not necessarily have a relationship to other members, but members of an organism demand a close-knit relationship to the other members and they are accountable to one another. The concept of a close relationship is enhanced by the use of the reciprocal pronoun 'one another.' In order for this body to function smoothly and efficiently, truth must be expressed among the members. Deception by one member not only harms that member but the whole body suffers as well and in the end self-destruction occurs. Chrysostom wisely asks if the eye sees a serpent does it lie to the foot? Or if the nose smells a deadly drug will it lie to the mouth? Or if the tongue tastes something bitter will it lie to the stomach? In this same vein, Paul points out that although there are many individual members, these members comprise one body (cf. Rom 12:5). Thus, as new persons, believers are commanded to speak the truth with one another."* [Hoehner, 618; see also Eadie, 347]