



Truth Matters

A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

Scripture Reading

Week of
March 13th - 19th



Monday

- ❖ Numbers 9, 10
- ❖ Psalm 46
- ❖ Luke 2

Tuesday

- ❖ Numbers 11, 12
- ❖ Psalm 47
- ❖ Luke 3

Wednesday

- ❖ Numbers 13, 14
- ❖ Psalm 48
- ❖ Luke 4

Thursday

- ❖ Numbers 15, 16
- ❖ Psalm 49
- ❖ Luke 5

Friday

- ❖ Numbers 17, 18
- ❖ Psalm 50
- ❖ Luke 6

Saturday

- ❖ Numbers 19, 20

Sunday

- ❖ Numbers 21, 22

Ephesians 4:11-16 - Speaking the Truth in Love

by Philip Bramblet

And He Himself gave the apostles, and the prophets, and the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of service, for the building up of the body of Christ, ¹³till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of Christ's fullness; ¹⁴that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-Christ-¹⁶rom whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for building itself up in love.

In verse 15, Paul uses the phrase, "Speaking the truth in love." What does this mean? It's often taken out of context and used to mean something like, "If you have to tell someone they're fat and need to lose weight (speaking the truth), do so in a way that is gentle and non-offensive (in love)." Or, "If you have to rebuke a believer about sin in his life, do it in a

loving way." Those are both excellent words of advice, but not what Paul means in this context.

First, Paul equates the saints' work of service with speaking the truth in love. It's clear from the way Paul structures his ideas that he's being more specific in verse 15 about what he meant in verse 12 when he mentioned the *work of service* that all saints are to do. In verse 12 it is the saints' work of service that builds up the body. In verse 15 it is speaking the truth in love that builds up the body. The two ideas are clearly parallel. All the saints are to serve one another *by speaking the truth in love.*

Second, Paul is focusing not on truth-telling in general, but specifically on biblical or spiritual truth. In Ephesians 4:5 Paul mentions that there is "one faith," referring to one body of truth in which we as Christians believe. In 4:11 he lists men who are all given by Christ to proclaim biblical truth. In 4:14 he instructs the readers to not be deceived by false teaching. The "truth" of verse 15 is therefore in contrast to the false teaching of verse 14, i.e., biblical truth. In 4:21, he says we have "learned Christ," "heard

him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." Again, spiritual truth is emphasized in the context. So Paul is not telling us to share harsh truths in a gentle way, but to speak biblical or spiritual truth to each other in love. This assumes that each church member is reading and meditating on biblical truth constantly so we can fulfil our part of building up the body.

Third, in love refers to relationships among believers. In Eph. 4:16 each church member is called a *joint*. In the analogy to the church it gives the idea of connectedness, or relationship. Our church should be more than a social gathering. It should be more than a place where people come together to fulfil their duty of going to church every week. Believers are brothers and sisters in the family of God. How should God's children treat each other? Consider the following few verses:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

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Ephesians 4:11-16 - Speaking the Truth in Love

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"But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more" (1 Thess. 4:9-10).

"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart" (1 Pet. 1:22).

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death" (1 John 3:14).

Clearly, God expects his children to have more than casual, social relationships with each other. Back in Ephesians 4:16, Paul describes each joint of the body (each church member) doing its part to cause the body to grow, thus building itself up *in love*. So when he talks about speaking the truth in love, Paul means we should be sharing spiritual truth within the context of deepening spiritual relationships within the church. Therefore, speaking the truth *in love* means that we must be willing to cultivate deeper relationships with each other. Each one of us must actively seek to have a relationship with each other that is based on genuine, pure love and expresses itself in sharing

spiritual truth with each other. Each one of us must be a joint in the body that draws each part closer together and helps the body grow.

Now let's get really practical about this:

Speaking the truth in love means God wants me to build up the church by sharing spiritual truth with other believers while seeking deeper spiritual relationships of love with them.

How can I do this? Here are a few ideas:

- ◆ I can pray for the spiritual growth of my fellow-believers.
- ◆ I can tell them what I am praying for them.
- ◆ I can talk about ways in which God has answered my prayers.
- ◆ I can ask them to pray for me in relation to specific spiritual issues.
- ◆ Instead of focusing on and being annoyed by their faults, I can look for signs of God's grace in their lives and tell them when I see such signs.
- ◆ I can tell my fellow-believers how God has been working in my own life.
- ◆ I can ask them to share their salvation testimony with me.
- ◆ I can try to focus conversations around God: how does God relate to the topic of discussion? Is there something about the topic of discussion that points to or illustrates something about God?
- ◆ I can see personal humility before God and others as a beautiful and desirable virtue to be

earnestly sought after (Matt. 18:4). Humility is absolutely necessary for any relationship to get very deep.

◆ I can invite fellow-believers to my home or some other meeting place with the explicit purpose in mind of having spiritual fellowship, not just social interaction. (This is what our Growth Groups are intended for, although you could do this in addition to or instead of Growth Groups)

◆ I can follow Christ's instructions about going to a fellow-believer I have wronged or who has wronged me and humbly and gently seeking to restore fellowship (Matt. 5:22-24; 18:15-17, 21-35; Gal. 6:1; 1 Cor. 13:4-7).

◆ I can try to cultivate the attitude and atmosphere of a loving family with my fellow-believers.

◆ I can share specific verses or truths that have been a blessing, help, instruction, rebuke, or challenge to me.

◆ I can ask my fellow-believers for help in understanding a verse or spiritual truth and discuss it with them.

◆ Whenever I meet a fellow-believer during the week, I can ask if they would mind praying together before we part.

◆ If you're not already doing these things, try choosing one of the ideas above and one specific believer to practice it on. Or, focus on a couple ideas for a specific period of time, perhaps a week or a month. Husbands and wives should definitely be doing these kinds of things with each other. Or, think of your own strategy for putting these ideas into practice.

Self-centered Sanctification in Prayer

by Pastor Powers

The New Testament is replete with both examples and exhortations encouraging believers to pray for one another. One need only to read the letters of Paul to catch this reality (cf. Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21; Philip. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-14; 1 Thess. 3:9-13; 2 Thess. 1:3-12).

It is one thing to get a believer, myself included, to advance in their sanctification to the point where they pray with disciplined regularity. It is quite another thing to get a believer to the point where they have grown in their love for others so that they routinely pray for other's sanctification. My point is simple: Christians need to guard against a self-centered prayer life. That is to say, we need to be watchful and observant with regard to our private prayers. How much of your prayer life is concerned with merely your own sanctification? How much of your prayer life is concerned with only your own needs - even if those needs are your own spiritual needs?

I read a startling quote in a book on prayer: "What we care for; we pray for." We pray for

those things we are truly concerned about. This is stunning! Think about it...Do a survey of your own prayers from the past two days. What occupied your concern? More to the point: how much of what we say we are concerned about never shows up in our prayers? Does the absence declare a disconnect? Is there a subtle hypocrisy being uncovered?

My concern today is that my own prayers demonstrate that I am way above and beyond more concerned for my sanctification than I am my wife's, my children's, my congregation's. This is a gentle, yet painful rebuke to me. Might this brief survey of my prayers over the past two days betray the reality that I am not concerned with your sanctification? I think so!

The fix, however, is not difficult or hidden. Jesus offers a wonderful truism or axiom: "Where your heart is there your treasure will be also" (Matt. 6:21). Let's re-word the axiom: The storehouse of treasure demonstrates the heart's affections. You don't look at my heart to see what I treasure; you look at my treasure to see what's in my heart. This is not just an axiomatic proverb; it is also a practical principle: the heart follows treasure.

This principle is painfully obvious when we observe the connection between material things and heart affections. Look at a man's purchases and you see what he loves. So might it be true in all other areas of life, say, of my prayer life?

Is the fix to my self-centered myopic prayer life found in this principle? Absolutely. If I am not praying for your sanctification because it is not a concern of mine; where do I begin? Do I wait for the concern to arise? No! I start by stacking up prayers for others in my storehouse of prayer and my heart follows. The heart follows the treasure. I begin by praying for you and my concern for you will increase. Do you sense a snowball building? I do! The more I pray, the more I am concerned. The more I am concerned, the more I pray, etc.

I have disciplined myself to simply sit down with a list of names that I can pray through. At first, there was not much to pray about. But then, I found myself in conversations asking questions and seeking information that I could take back to my sheet. Soon, I needed updates. My concern was increasing. We simply need to pray for one another.