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Principles of New Life
4: 25-32

Principles of new life DIG: According to Rabbi Sha'ul, what specific actions distinguish the life of a believer from the life of a pagan? What does he mean when he says don't leave room for the Adversary? Why do believers in Messiah often say things to hurt others – even though God clearly instructs them not to do so? Anger, in and of itself, is not a sin. However, what are some ways it can quickly lead to sin?

REFLECT: What is one way you have seen the contrast of the "old" and the "new" in your life? What does Paul say we are to do with our words and actions? What are some ways you have learned to redirect a conversation when a friend wants to gossip or speak badly about another person who is not present? What are some ways that you seek to build others up with your words? How does it make you feel when you can build them up?

How does remembering the way God has been compassionate with me, help me to extend that same compassion to others through my words and actions?



The only reliable evidence of a person's being saved is not past experience of receiving the Messiah, but a present life that reflects **Him**. **Anyone who says, "I know Him," but isn't obeying His commands is a liar and the truth is not in him (First John 2:4).** New creatures act like new creatures. **If anyone is in Messiah, they are a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, everything has become new (Second Corinthians 5:17).** However, because of our **old sin** nature, we are still very human. So, **the Rabbi** commands us in the strength of **the Ruach** to subdue our unredeemed humanness **(First Corinthians 9:27)**, and to live as new creatures in submission to **Messiah** as our new **Master**. After showing what believers are and have positionally in **Messiah (Chapters 1-3), Paul** first gives us some general instruction for the practicality of living the **new** life **(4:1-24)**, and then continues throughout the rest of the letter to give specific commands for the conduct of that life. Here, in **4:25-32**, **Sha'ul** gives a mitzvot reflecting several contrasts between the **old** life and the **new** one, from being lost, to being found. **From lying to speaking the truth (4:25):** Liars will not inherit the Kingdom of **God (Revelation 21:8; First Corinthians 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 that he is saved. The person who continually lies as a regular part of his daily living shows himself to be a child of the Adversary, not of **YHVH (John 8:44)**. The believer should not be a habitual liar. He is to be characterized by **stripping off falsehood,** because **falsehood** is incompatible with his new nature and unacceptable to his new **Lord**. Quoting **Zechariah 8:16, Paul** goes from the negative mitzvot on to the positive command: **let everyone speak truth with his neighbor (4:25a). Messiah Himself** is **the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6); the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** is **the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17)**, and **God's Word is truth (John 17:17).** When a person is saved, he steps out of the dominion of **falsehood** into the dominion of **truth**, and every form of lying therefore is utterly inconsistent with his new self.[184]

We are to **speak the truth** with other believers **because we are intimately related to each other as parts of a body (4:25b).** Real fellowship, whether in a marriage, a friendship, where you worship, depends on **speaking the truth**. In fact, the tunnel of conflict is the passageway to intimacy in any relationship. Until you care enough to confront and resolve underlying barriers, you will never grow closer to each other. But when conflict is handled correctly, we grow closer to each other by facing and resolving our differences. The Bible says: **In the end, people appreciate frankness more than flattery (Proverbs 28:23 NLT).**[185]

From unrighteous anger to righteous anger (4:26-27): Be angry, but don't sin (4:26a). It is commendable to be **angry** in the right situation. **Anger** is not always a **sin**; there is a righteous **anger**. This quote is actually from the words of King David as he spoke of righteous indignation **(Psalm 4:5)**. **Yeshua Himself** expressed **anger** but never **sinned**. **He** displayed **zealous anger** over the injustice in the Temple courts (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Bs – Jesus' First Cleansing of the Temple at the Passover**). It is indeed right to oppose all forms of injustice. The problem is that we mortals often confuse righteous indignation for the unrighteous **anger** of our fallen nature. Hence, there is the encouragement to refrain from **sin** despite an expression of **anger**.

But how do we do that? The simplest answer is to be **angry** at the things that **God** is **angry** about, and to **hate** what **God hates**? So, what does **God hate**? Once again, **the Word of God** gives us guidance. **There are six things ADONAI hates, seven which he detests: a haughty look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that plots wicked schemes, feet swift in running to do evil, a false witness who lies with every breath, and him who sows strife among brothers (Proverbs 6:16-19).** Moreover, **Paul** counsels believers not to **let the sun go down before you have dealt with the cause of your anger (4:26b).** This is wise advice. Unforgiveness has a terribly destructive effect on one's soul. It has been said that holding onto a grudge is similar to taking a poison pill and waiting for the other person to die! Unforgiveness can be devastating to one's spiritual life, but that is not the worst of it. Such **sin** opens the door for **the Adversary** to maximize the damage.[186]

There are certain situations that make you more vulnerable to being **angry** than others. Some circumstances will cause you to stumble almost immediately, while others don't bother you much. These situations are unique to your weaknesses, and you need to identify them because **Satan** surely knows them. **He** knows exactly what trips you up, and **he** is constantly working to get you into those situations **(First Peter 5:8)**. Therefore, you should identify your typical pattern of temptation and prepare to avoid those situations as much as possible. The Bible repeatedly tells us to anticipate and be ready to face temptation, **otherwise you leave room for the Adversary (4:27).** Wise planning reduces temptation. Follow godly advice: **Plan carefully what you do . . . avoid evil and walk straight ahead. Don't go one step off the right path (Proverbs 4:26-27). God's people avoid evil ways, and they protect themselves by watching where they go (Proverbs 16:17).**[187]

From stealing to sharing (4:28): The thief must stop stealing. Instead, he should make an honest living by his own efforts (4:28a). The grammar of this verse suggests that some of **the Ephesians** struggled with this **sin** in the past. Believers in **Yeshua** are to turn from any such behavior and make an honest living by their own efforts. There are to be no thieves in the community of **Messiah**. Each individual is to perform an honest job to provide for themselves and their family. **This way he will be able to share with those in need (4:28b).** Instead of the previous life of thievery, and taking advantage of other people, the new believers in **Ephesus** are told to even **share with those in need.** It is reminiscent of the Torah mitzvot to leave the corners of their field in order to share their blessings with the less fortunate (see the commentary on **Leviticus Dh – Be Holy because ADONAI is Holy**). It should not surprise us that **the Body of Messiah** is to conduct itself with many of the same principles already given to **Isra'el** in the Torah of Moshe.[188]

From harmful words to good words (4:29-30): The tongue is exceedingly difficult to control **(Jam 3:6-8)**. But it only speaks what the heart tells it to say **(Mt 12:34; Mk 7:14-23**). Thus, a foul mouth comes from a foul heart, and the only way for **ADONAI** to cleanse our **tongue** is through **His Word**, which fills the heart with **whatever is true, noble, righteous, pure, loveable or admirable, on some virtue or on something praiseworthy (Phi 4:8).**[189] **Let no harmful language come from your mouth, only good words that are helpful in meeting the need, words that will benefit those who hear them (4:29).** But, since most of the **Ephesian** believers originally came from the pagan world (see **Bl – The Pagan Lifestyle**), this would be a timely reminder. Fallen society usually does not think twice about the use of inappropriate or **harmful** words. In many places it is actually part of the accepted culture or even considered a sign of strength. In Judaism, and now in the Messianic community, it is to be otherwise. Our words reflect the real condition of our spirit and we are to use them wisely. For example, what is considered one of the worst **sins** in the TaNaKh is speaking evil of others. A graphic reminder is the account of **Miriam** and **Aaron** speaking against **Moshe** along with the resulting judgment (see the commentary on **Numbers Bu – The Rebellion of Aaron and Miryam**).

Even if there is some **truth** to a statement, one is encouraged to hold back his or her words if they are not edifying. **The Talmud** (see **The Life of Christ Ei – The Oral Law**) **even takes it further in an interesting discussion of this topic. It is said that we should even be wary of negative, non-verbal communication. It is called *avak lashon ha'ra* (the dust of evil speaking)**

and includes such actions as rolling the eyes, nodding in approval to negative comments or spreading innuendos. How interesting that we can be influenced by the negative **dust of evil speaking** or by the positive **dust of our rabbi** (see **4:21**).

The principle of avoiding **evil speech** obviously carries over to the listener as well. **The Talmud sums up its perspective in the following, "Why do human fingers resemble pegs? So that if one hears something harmful, one can plug one's fingers in one's ears (Tractate Ketuvot 5b). Rabbi Sha'ul's** command is not only to avoid that which is **harmful**, but also to speak words that will benefit others. Such language will not be destructive or even neutral, but will build up those who hear it. In short, we have enough negativity in the pagan world. We certainly don't need it in the community of **Messiah**. Is our language uplifting or negative? Are people encouraged or discouraged when they are around us?

It's bad enough that **hurtful** language has a negative impact on others. But such behavior also hurts **the Ruach** who lives within the believers. If we aren't motivated to give better speech on account of those around us, then we should give thought to the fact that **God Himself** might be hurt in the process.[190] **Don't cause grief to God's Ruach Ha'Kodesh (4:30a).** All **sin** is painful to **God**, but **sin** in **His** children breaks **His** heart. When **His** children refuse to change the ways of the **old** life for the ways of the **new**, **God grieves**. **The Spirit of God** weeps, as it were, when **He** sees believers **lying** instead of **speaking the truth**, becoming **unrighteously angry** rather than having a **zealous anger** over injustice, **stealing** instead of **sharing**, and **speaking hurtful words** instead of **good,** uplifting and gracious **words.**

Whatever violates the will of **ADONAI** and the holiness of the heart will grieve **the third Person of the Trinity**. **Grieving** can lead to **quenching** or **extinguishing (First Thess 5:19)**, and therefore to a forfeiture of power and blessing. It should also be noted that such responses by **the Ruach** indicate that **He** is **a Person**, which can be seen in the use of personal pronouns referring to **Him (John 14:17, 16:13,** and so on**)**. **His** identity as a **Comforter**, or **Helper (John 16:16** and **26, 15:26, 16:7),** indicates that **He** is like **Messiah**, who is **a Person**. **The Ruach Ha'Kodesh** has intellect **(First Cor 2:11)**, feelings **(Rom 8;27, 15:30)**, and will **(First Cor 12:11)**. **He** works **(First Cor 12:11)**, searches **(First Cor 2;10)**, speaks **(Acts 13:2)**, testifies **(John 15:26)**, teaches **(John 14:26)**, convicts **(John 6:8-11)**, regenerates **(John 3:5)**, intercedes **(Acts 8:26)**, guides **(John 16:13)**, glorifies **Messiah (John 16:14)**, and directs service to **God (Acts 16:6-7)**. And

specifically in light of this portion of Scripture pertaining to **the Ephesians, the Spirit** can be tested **(Acts 5:9)**, lied to **(Acts 5:3)**, resisted **(Acts 7:51)**, insulted **(Heb 10:29)**, and blasphemed (see **The Life of Messiah Em – Whoever Blasphemes Against the Holy Spirit Will Never be Forgiven**). Therefore, **Sha'ul** asks, in effect, **"**How can you do what is so displeasing to **the One** who **has sealed you as His property until the day of final redemption"** (see **Aq – Sealed with the Ruach**)**? The Spirit** is **God's** personal mark of authenticity on us, **His stamp** of divine approval. How could we **grieve the One** who is our **Helper**, **Comforter**, **Teacher**, **Advocate**, **Divine Resident** of our hearts, and sponsor of our **eternal redemption (4:30b)**. **Paul** is not saying that we should avoid **sin** in order to keep our salvation; but rather, that we should be eternally grateful to **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** for **His** making it impossible for us to lose it (see **The Life of Christ Ms – The Eternal Security of the Believer**).[191]

From natural vices to supernatural virtues (4:31-32): The apostle ties this appeal to the fact of **the Ruach's** presence in our lives. **Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, violent assertiveness and slander, along with all spitefulness (4:31).** The renewed life includes all facets: words, thoughts, and actions. Whatever is ungodly and produces negative fruit, we are told to get rid of it. These things not only hurt others, but they greatly hinder our own spiritual journey. Don't we have enough challenges without dragging an extra backpack filled with cement? We are cautioned to get rid of the extra weight so we may more fully enjoy **ADONAI's** blessing in our life.

Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted; and forgive each other, just as in the Messiah God has also forgiven you (4:32). In contrast to the problematic attitudes of our old sin nature, the Messianic believers are encouraged to put on that which makes for edification. Instead of tearing down, we are to build up. Despite the temptation to hang onto negative attitudes, we are to let them go in the spirit of forgiveness. Some may object to this high standard, as it seems virtually impossible within our own strength. That is why **the Rabbi** immediately ties these positive attitudes to the work of **Yeshua** on our behalf. Since **YHVH** has shown such great kindness to us, how can we not treat others the same way? If **the Father**, through **Yeshua**, had forgiven us of our own transgressions, do we have any legitimate basis not to show sincere forgiveness to those around us? Those who understand the grace of **Messiah** are the ones who find it easy to extend that same kind of grace to others. We should ask, "How is my own personal spiritual journey progressing? Am I having more and more victory over the old sin nature? Do people

see in me the good fruit of a life submitted to **the Ruach**?" May we continue to walk in the abundant life provided for us through **Messiah**.[192]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, what a wonderful **Father You** are! It is a joy to please **You**. Life's short times of happiness will soon be over; but as I live to please **You**, there is an eternal joy in my heart. I bow before **You** in humble worship, recognizing how glorious and how wise **You** are. Your love is so amazingly great and **Your** omniscience of knowing all is so wonderful. It is wise to follow **Your Word**. All that **You** loving tell me to do is for my best. It is foolish to think that real joy could be found by going my own way. Thank **You** so much for not only redeeming those who **love You** from sin's power and punishment; but also living within your children **(John 14:23)**, always being there **(Hebrews 13:5c)** in a loving relationship to help and to guide. There are many problems in this world, but they will be over soon and heaven's joys will last forever and ever **(Romans 8:18)**! It is a comfort to know that you, my Holy Almighty **Father**, are sovereign overall and you will bring those who **love You** to **Your** eternal home of joy and peace. For all eternity I know that I will have the wonderful privilege to live with **You**, praising **You** forever for how fantastic **You** are! In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*