

Safeguarded Within the Community of Faith

JVI, Long Lake Community Church, 07.28.19, 1

Texts, ESV: Ephesians 4.25; Leviticus 19.18; Ephesians 4.26-27; Malachi 4.2

i. The last couple messages from Ephesians 4 have been about renewal

a *Renewal of the Interior Life and Community Renewal*

b In the 90's and the early part of the 2000's the term community was trending

1 Everyone was talking about building community

2 However, the lofty ideals of community were not always very practical

c Paul talks about community, but makes it practical . . . uncomfortably practical

ii. Ephesians 4.25: The community of faith keeps us honest

a "falsehood" is often translated as "lying" in other Bibles

1 It can mean a deliberate lie, it can also mean any type of deceit

*A lie sets us apart from those around us. The open book of our life is closed. Those we care about, or who care about us, canNOT read us. We are hiding. We do the same thing with deceit. For instance, if we are exaggerating, we are falsely setting ourselves above others. We are isolating ourselves. It's the same with other forms of lies (cheating, ½ truths, denial, minimizing, keeping secrets, etc.).

2 Lies isolate us from community, so the fix is NOT only truth-telling

*If I am lying to make myself look better than others, I need to become real about others. I need to see them as God sees them, as who they are becoming in Him, not just what I see now. *On the other hand*, if I think others are better than me, and I am lying to make myself look good in their eyes, then I need to be honest about myself, about who I am becoming in God, not just who I am now.

b The answer is NOT only truth-telling, but also connecting with community

1 The answer is speaking truth with others as . . . *neighbors*

a *Neighbor*, Hebrew writings: extending family love to outsiders

b **Leviticus 19.18**: Do you recognize this Text? Love of *neighbor*

2 Speak truth with *neighbors*, and connect with Christians as *members*

*There is a great mystery in the fact that Paul calls us "members." This is not language that is commonly used in that era, so the people of God have a unique connection.¹

3 Truth is NOT our only motivation to stop lying, community is

iii. The community of faith keeps us in check

a Now, for one of the most interesting verses on human emotion in the NT

1 This verse is often read by itself, but it's best read with the next verse

2 **Ephesians 4.26-27**: Anger is 1 emotion that we need to keep in check

3 This verse says that anger is not always wrong, but it can be

¹ Jerome, *Epistle to the Ephesians ii.iv.25*.

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b What are some ways that anger can be wrong? I'll share 4

1 *Rage*: It's best not to get angry, but if we do, don't give into rage²

a) If I allow my anger to escalate into rage

b) Then I give my control to an emotion . . . that becomes sin

2 *Grudge*: We get angry if someone hurts us, we hold on, don't forgive³

3 *Anger & the Night*: Paul says there's a real connection with the night

a) The Jewish day begins at sunset the day before

b) "Got up on the wrong side of the bed" . . . wrong

c) Psychology: more about how we go to bed

d) If the sun sets on our anger, it rises the next day on our anger

e) If we let anger boil over at night, we seek vengeance⁴

*Gregory Nazianzen paraphrase: Anger at night is the opposite of the *Sun of Righteousness* in the morning, **Malachi 4.2**. Anger is like a food that we don't want to eat right before we turn in for the night. It would be much better to free ourselves from anger than to let it have some harmful effect on the soul if we try to digest it during the night watches. This can also mean a metaphorical or "mystical" night.⁵

4 *Darkness*: If an angry night is metaphorical, that seems worse to me

a) It means that anger can lead us into some soul problems

b) Anger can lead us into a real darkness of the interior life . . .

iv. But we are Safeguarded Within the Community of Faith, Ephesians 6.25-27

a Lying and Rage are just 2 ways of many that we can give in to the enemy

b These verses are in the middle of a passage of sins against community

c 1st of all, there is the possibility that we can yield to the enemy

1 Paul is NOT discussing demon possession for Christians, NOT possible

2 But, Christians can slowly give up control to our lower nature and to evil

d 2nd, Christians have to *voluntarily* give up control to the enemy

1 Paul makes it clear that the enemy canNOT take control from us

2 In light of this passage, we are under the grace of God in community

Invitation: It's humbling to know that we need each other

We don't need to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps.

We need community. We need to walk this road together to safeguard each other.

Paul is saying that spiritual formation is community formation.

² John Chrysostom, *Homily on Ephesians xiv.iv.25-27*.

³ Jerome, *Epistle to the Ephesians ii.iv.26*.

⁴ Basil the Great, *The Letters.xxii.3*.

⁵ Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration xlv.16*.