

Ephesians 4:25

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

1. The Church of Jesus Christ as One Body

As Christians, we live by faith, not by sight. But who gives us this faith, and where does it come from and grow? It is given to us by the Holy Spirit and grows through the Word of Christ. Through the gospel, we believe in Jesus Christ and what He has accomplished. We hold onto the reality of our salvation, which Jesus has already completed, is currently accomplishing, and will fully accomplish in the future. We also believe in the love and grace that Jesus has bestowed upon us, and we find our lives rooted in that love. In this relationship with Jesus, we experience fellowship with Him. The Holy Spirit works to renew our hearts. God tells us that our old self has died with Christ, and we have been born again as a new self with Him. Our old self belonged to this world, living under sin and death, but they are gone. We have been raised as children of God, resembling Jesus and belonging to heaven. We must first believe this truth and renew our hearts, considering ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God.

We must always return to faith, as it is the foundation of our lives. Saints are those who live by faith from beginning to end. Our true reality is found in Jesus. Our lives start with what Jesus has accomplished and will culminate with what He will achieve in the future. Since it is by the grace of Jesus that we are sustained from beginning to end, we must also maintain our faith throughout. Because our lives are rooted in faith and in Jesus, they can be continually restored and ultimately filled with joy, thanksgiving, and hope. Without faith, we inevitably fall into despair and arrogance. However, with faith, we are called to hold on to the grace of Jesus more humbly. Instead of losing heart or succumbing to despair, we should serve His church and the saints using the grace and gifts that Jesus has given us.

Please remember that the faith given to all the saints saved by Jesus allows us to grow into new people who resemble Him as one body in one faith. This is the reality of how Jesus sanctifies us through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is essential for the entire church to grow together through the faith and practice of each individual saint. We must reflect on our own lives for the sake of the whole body of Christ, constantly checking whether our words, thoughts, and actions stem from faith, and striving to share fellowship in that faith. We should engage in a fellowship where we serve one another and build each other up in love. Today's text reminds us of this calling, and the most important principle regarding how our fellowship in faith should be conducted is found in today's text.

Ephesians 4:25, "Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another."

In the previous verse, verse 15, Paul tells us to speak the truth in love. In verse 25, he emphasizes the importance of putting away falsehood and speaking the truth. The truth he refers to here is the gospel truth. Why does he insist on this? In the latter part of verse 25, he explains that "we are members one of another," indicating that we are all interconnected as one body and should grow together. Thus, the neighbors he mentions refer to the saints who are part of this one body and members of each other. Paul is emphasizing the need to recognize our unity as members of one body and to have fellowship in the

truth. He urges us to maintain harmony and grow in the Word. The purity and unity of the church must go hand in hand. In verses 15-16, he elaborates on this important reality.

Ephesians 4:15-16, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

When each member receives grace from Jesus and shares fellowship according to the measure given to them, they grow together. The most important aspect of the fellowship that the saints share in order to grow into one body of Christ is to speak the truth in love, which means sharing fellowship through the gospel of truth. So, what hinders and harms our growth into one body of Christ? It is the absence of truth—specifically, the absence of the gospel, Christ, and His grace and love. In today's text, this absence is referred to as falsehood or lies. These lies stem from human thoughts and worldly principles. Consequently, a lie is not merely the opposite of honesty; it encompasses everything that is untrue, anything that lacks truth, the gospel, Jesus, and His grace and love. Satan is the father of all lies. When the fellowship among members is built on lies or falsehoods that lack the gospel of truth, it not only prevents the entire body of Christ from growing but also leads to spiritual sickness and fractures unity. The church and the saints are set apart from this world by the truth, so the fellowship of saints within the church must be established solely on truth.

Paul previously explained the foundation for sharing fellowship centered around truth. In verse 24, just before commanding us to speak the truth in verse 25, he says that we are "a new creation created according to God in righteousness and true holiness." Since we are recreated in the image of God, who is the embodiment of truth, we are called to share and can indeed participate in holy fellowship in the gospel of truth. Additionally, in verse 21, he mentions, "If indeed you have heard him and have been taught by him, just as the truth is in Jesus." If the truth is in Jesus, it also dwells within the members of His body, which is why we are told to engage in fellowship grounded in truth. This is crucial because the body of Jesus, who is the truth, cannot be associated with lies or falsehood. Thus, this commandment reflects the reality of the salvation that Jesus accomplished.

It is important to understand that urging us to speak the truth does not simply mean refraining from lying. Just because we do not lie and communicate honestly does not necessarily mean we are conveying the truth. Healthy fellowship among believers will thrive when we communicate in ways that reflect the gospel of truth, rooted in faith, and grounded in our knowledge of Jesus. Lies or falsehoods encompass anything that contradicts or opposes this gospel of truth. Regardless of how appealing or acceptable it may appear to others, anything originating from those who lack a relationship with Jesus and God is ultimately a falsehood or lie. This raises the question: whose reality embodies such a lie?

John 8:44-47, "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. 46 Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? 47 Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

Jesus is the truth and the one who testifies to it, while Satan is a liar and deceiver with no truth in him. He has no relationship with God; all lies originate from Satan. Sin began with deception. Satan first tempted Eve with lies, and Eve then tempted Adam, leading them to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, resulting in their fall. This is why they turned away from God. Lies mark the beginning of all sin.

To embrace lies is to deny the existence of God, oppose Him, and abandon Him. This leads to a focus on personal opinions and desires, following the worldly mindset of sinners who reject God. If believers engage in fellowship with these lies, blindly accept human reasoning or worldly principles, it spreads throughout the church, causing sin and division, undermining the unity that Jesus achieved. Even if those promoting such ideas appear good and advocate for social justice in the world, if they abandon the principles of truth found in God's Word, they promote falsehoods. Therefore, the church and its members must consistently be grounded in the truth of the gospel, discerning and combating falsehoods. They must be vigilant, ensuring that falsehood does not take root in the church, and actively pursue the Word of Truth.

John 8:46b-47, "If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? 47 Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

Those who belong to God recognize and believe in the truth, while those who do not belong to God do not accept the truth. Jesus embodies the truth, yet the world often rejects Him. Ultimately, the distinction between truth and falsehood hinges on one's belief in Jesus. Those who believe in Him are aligned with the truth, whereas those who do not believe are aligned with falsehood.

1 John 2:21-22a, "I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?"

A lie is equivalent to denying Jesus, while the truth is found in knowing Him. Knowing Jesus involves having a proper relationship with Him. Speaking the truth means bearing witness to Jesus through our faith, living as someone who knows, believes in, and has a relationship with Him. On the other hand, speaking falsely implies that there is no Jesus, no relationship with Him, and no connection to His words. As a result, any fellowship in the world that lacks this truth is ultimately a fellowship of lies. This absence signifies a lack of Jesus, salvation, the love of the cross, the will of God, and heaven. Therefore, the saints cannot participate in such deceptive fellowship within the church.

This does not mean you cannot engage in discussions about the events happening in the world. However, no matter what you say, it should always align with the principles of the Word of God. You cannot separate your words from the truth of the gospel or act as if your faith has no relevance. It's as though you forget that Jesus is a part of your life, that He saved you, that heaven exists, and that Jesus reigns. Our fellowship should focus on knowing Jesus, being saved by Him, striving to be like Him, and sharing His love, hope, and glory. This is essential because we are all members of one body in Christ.

An example of false fellowship within the church, the body of Jesus, can be found in Acts 5. God punished Ananias and Sapphira for deceiving both the church and God by hiding a portion of the proceeds from the sale of their land, all while pretending to have offered everything. They sought to be part of the church while building their foundation on lies. Lacking a genuine relationship with Jesus, they were devoid of the gospel of truth and faith. Instead, their hearts were filled with deceit and influenced by Satan, as they pursued worldly glory and pride. The Holy Spirit does not tolerate such deception in the church. Ananias and Sapphira were unbelievers whose hearts harbored lies, which stood in stark contrast to the unity Jesus had established among His followers. As a result, God cut them off to prevent the spread of sin within the church. In the Book of Revelation, we see that the saints redeemed by the blood of the Lamb reside in heaven, praising God. The depiction of the church in heaven illustrates a reality that is far removed from the lies and deceit found on earth.

2. The Life of the Church and Saints United with Jesus

Revelation 14:4-5, "It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, 5 and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless."

The saints who belong to God and to the Lamb, Jesus, are described as those who are free from lies. In heaven, we will live as people who fully know and love Jesus, love our fellow believers, and completely obey the Word of God, resulting in a life without falsehood. There is no principle other than Jesus. This is also found in the Psalms:

Psalm 15:1-2, "O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? 2 He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart"

When asked who can live and dwell in the house of the Lord, God answered, "Those who walk uprightly, practice justice, and speak the truth in their hearts." This psalm ultimately refers to Jesus. He is the One who lived completely upright before God, practiced justice, and spoke truthfully from His heart. Jesus is to dwell in the Tabernacle and on the holy mountain of the Lord forever. But for whom did Jesus live this life? It is for you and me. So, who else does this psalm refer to? It also pertains to us. Just as Jesus is accepted as one who walks uprightly before God, practices justice, and speaks the truth in His heart, we, too, are accepted in the same way. Because of this, God allows us to live together with Him in heaven.

We believe that we are called to live the life of Jesus, who bore witness to the truth. For believers, living a life that testifies to the gospel is essential for healthy spiritual growth. It's important to remember the words from Ephesians 4:15: "Speak the truth in love." This emphasizes that we should bear witness to the truth with love. Simply having knowledge of God's word does not equate to bearing witness to the truth. Likewise, merely stating the truth does not mean we are truly testifying to it. If we were to evaluate and take pride in ourselves based on this, the Pharisees and Jewish leaders might seem like the best witnesses to the truth. However, Jesus called them hypocrites. They were not witnesses of the truth but rather servants of Satan, the father of lies. This brings us to a similar warning found in the book of 1 John,

1 John 4:20, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot[a] love God whom he has not seen."

Jewish leaders did not testify to the truth with love. They claimed to love God, but they did not love their brothers. God says this is a lie; if they did not love others, they did not truly love Him. Instead, they used God's word to boast about themselves and to criticize and condemn others. When Jesus, the true Word, came, they rejected and killed Him. They killed the truth with lies. This demonstrates that they did not believe in God or love Him, and therefore, they did not love the kingdom of God or His people. The truth always comes with love. True faith works through love because the gospel truth revolves around the love of Christ and the love of God. This is why Ephesians 4:15 encourages us to speak the truth in love, and 1 Corinthians 13:6 states that love rejoices in the truth. In the gospel, we understand Jesus' love as exemplified by the cross. We are called to love Jesus and, in turn, love our brothers with His love, thereby testifying to the truth. Ultimately, we love the church and its members, who are the body of Jesus.

I sincerely pray that God will help all the saints of Theophilus grow in fellowship and love only through the gospel of truth. May all our thoughts, words, actions, and lives stem from knowing, believing in, loving, and having a relationship with Jesus, along with having hope and anticipation of heaven. In this way, He will enable us to bear fruit that reflects Jesus. Saints, we are called to reject lies and not to think, speak,

or act like those in the world who do not embrace the gospel of truth. We must remember to share the gospel with love, as we testify to its message.

What words are coming out of our mouths right now? What words are we using to fellowship with one another? The Book of James tells us that the tongue of a sinner is a restless evil, full of deadly poison and that no one can tame it. This is because what is in the heart comes out of the mouth. However, God has given us a new heart filled with the gospel, Jesus, love, grace, forgiveness, and hope. He teaches us that we cannot simultaneously offer praise to God and curse our brothers. Instead, we are called to bear witness to the truth with a heart that reflects Jesus. Above all, we must remember that we are all members of one body united in Christ. May we, as members of Theophilus Presbyterian Church, witness the truth of the gospel and embody the love and forgiveness of Jesus, growing together into the full stature of Christ!