

**TITLE:** Household of God: The New Life (Cont') – Ephesians 4:25-32

**AIM:** Consider the new life in Christ, coming from a change in heart.

**INTRO:** When we say someone has a “change of heart” we generally understand that to mean not only that they have changed their mind about a certain matter, but that their attitudes and actions have fallen in line as well. As said last week, God brings about a change of heart in the lives of everyone who comes to faith in Christ. That change of heart is to be accompanied by a change in lifestyle which is the evidence of true conversion/saving faith. Theme: HofG – understanding that we are, seeking to understand what it means to be. I repeat what said last week, that members of God’s household have new hearts & live new lives. In Christ, we become new from the inside out. It’s the work of God in us, but it requires our cooperation, as we surrender to the Lordship of Christ, set our gaze on Him & seek to be like Him. We are to put off the old self – how we used to live, learn to think new – be renewed in the spirit of our minds, & put on the new self, created to be like Christ. But how should that look? In what ways are we to live new? What changes of heart should be evident in our lives? Paul gives some concrete examples of this in text: Ephesians 4:25-32 [READ]. Remind you of what considered last week. I) **Put away falsehood and speak the truth to one another.** If we’re going to follow Jesus, we need to develop the habit of telling the truth, in love, because of the relationship w/have w/God & w/each other. We who are in Christ are vitally connected to one another, “members of each other.” That’s the change of heart that must be evident – we realize that we belong to one another. Therefore I will/must promote truth, honesty. II) **Stop sinning in anger.** “Be angry & do not sin.” We never have to sin in expression of our anger, nor seek revenge. We don’t have to be controlled by our anger; rather we can be under the Holy Spirit’s control. A change of heart is seen in righteous anger, & in dealing

w/our anger, addressing the situation in love, & being willing to let anger go. III) **Stop stealing & start giving.** A change of heart is seen in hard work, giving our all in everything we do, using our hands & really every member of our body for good, to help others in need, to be about God's business. And a change of heart is also seen in the matter of giving, not being a taker, but a giver. IV) **No corrupting talk, but words that build up & encourage.** It's not just vulgarity that Paul speaks of, but primarily hurtful speech – slanderous, degrading, wounding talk. A change of heart is seen when we speak words that encourage, build up, when we & our mouths are instruments of God's grace. Now we'll pick up where we left off, w/vs30. V) **Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.** It seems almost that Paul had an interruption in his train of thought, but I think not. It's really a perfect Segway into what he would write next, not only vs31-32, but into chap5. The actions & the attitudes of the old self, not put off/away, grieve the Holy Spirit. That wd grieve is the Grk "lypeo," meaning "to make sorrowful, affect w/sadness, cause grief, offend" (Strong's). That the Holy Spirit can be grieved/offended strongly illustrates that He is indeed a person, not an it or simply a force. He is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity & He feels. He can be quenched (I Thess. 5:19) & grieved. Many ways to grieve the Holy Spirit. Obviously Paul understood that we can grieve the Holy Spirit by continuing in our old ways of living even after He has quickened us to faith in Christ. If we keep on lying or exhibiting uncontrolled anger or stealing or cutting others w/our talk, we grieve the Holy Spirit. If there is bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, or malice in our hearts, that grieves the Holy Spirit. Add to that list the things to which these actions & attitudes lead: division, neglected/negative witness, wounded family, etc. C. H. Spurgeon wrote, "Sin everywhere must be displeasing to the Spirit of Holiness, but sin in His own people is grievous to Him in the highest degree. He will not hate His people, but He does hate their

sins, & hates them all the more because they nestle in His children's bosoms. The Spirit would not be the Spirit of truth if He could approve of that which is false in us. He would not be pure if that which is impure in us did not grieve Him." Paul makes a very valid & imp argument for not grieving the Holy Spirit. It's by the Holy Spirit that we are "sealed for the day of redemption." He is the One who has quickened us to faith in Christ, who, by His indwelling presence marks us as belonging to God, who seals/secures us, guaranteeing our eternal destiny, who guides us day by day if we will but yield to His leading, follow His promptings. The Holy Spirit is our dearest & best friend & companion. We want to walk w/Him, not resist Him. We want to be led by Him, not push Him away or grieve His heart. The richest & most rewarding & effective times of my life/ministry are those times when I am in step w/the Holy Spirit, when by His leading I have communed w/the Father & known His very presence. But I confess to you that all too often those very times are cut short when by lustful thoughts or prideful attitudes or selfish desires I have quenched the Spirit & grieved Him away – not literally, but effectively. Why do I do that? Why do you? Again, Spurgeon wrote, "The Holy Spirit's grief is not of a petty, oversensitive nature. He is grieved w/us mainly for our own sakes, for He knows what misery sin will cost us. He reads our sorrows in our sins. He grieves over us because He sees how much chastisement we incur, & how much communion we miss." Yet Spurgeon points out that even in our grieving the Spirit we can find some assurance. He wrote, "Although the wd grieve is a painful one, yet there is honey in the rock; for it is an inexpressibly delightful thought, that He who rules heaven & earth, & is creator of all things, & the infinite & ever blessed God, condescends to enter into such infinite relationship w/His people that His divine mind may be affected by their actions. What a marvel that Deity should be said to grieve over the faults of beings so utterly

insignificant as we are!” The change of heart that should be evident in every believer is that we are thankful for what we have in Christ, especially the relationship we have entered into w/Almighty God, & we have a recognition of the Holy Spirit being w/in us. We want to live our lives under the Spirit’s control, which leads to the best of life in Christ.

**VI) Put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, malice, & be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving.** These are heart issues that must change as we follow Christ. Bitterness is “extreme wickedness, a bitter root...producing bitter fruit, bitter hatred” (Strong’s). David Gudzik pointed out that “Aristotle defined bitterness as ‘the resentful spirit that refuses reconciliation.’” We’re told in Hebrews 12:15 that a “root of bitterness” comes from not taking hold of the grace of God. When we’ve been wronged, God gives grace to address & forgive & let go. When we refuse, bitterness sets in & as the author of Hebrews put it, bitterness causes trouble & by it many become defiled. It’s never a pretty picture. Bitter insistence on getting “my way” or having “my say” results in division & hurts the body. We put away bitterness by laying it at the feet of Jesus, asking Him to heal the hurt & love thru us. Wd translated “wrath” is the Grk “thymos” – “passion, anger boiling up;” used to describe “inflaming wine, which either drives the drinker mad or kills him w/its strength” (Strong’s) – controlling, angry passion. The wd translated anger is “orge” – “temper, agitation of the soul, impulse, violent emotion, indignation, anger exhibited in punishment” (Strong’s). The difference between wrath & anger seems to be that wrath is, as Gudzik put it, “an outburst of the moment,” whereas anger is “a settled disposition,” sort of an underlying approach to life. The aim of anger is to get even, pay back, or at least to wish the object of your anger ill will. Do you really want to live that way? Bitter, full of anger, out of control? That certainly has no place in the Christian’s life. “Clamor” is another word for “outcry” – again it’s lashing out against

someone verbally. It's someone making noise, on a rampage or tirade, demanding to be heard & heeded. Where is love of neighbor or unity in that? Slander is the Grk "blasphema" - "speech that is injurious to another's good name," (Strong's), speaking evil or ill of someone else. That's certainly not building others up, but tearing down. Malice is "ill-will, desire to injure, wickedness that is not ashamed to break laws" (Strong's). It's easy to see how none of these are good for a marriage, family, church family or any relationship. Paul says they are to be put away – removed, caused to cease. We are to put these off, but we certainly need God's help – surrender, seek Him, & let go. Instead of these heart issues from our old self, Paul says we're to "be kind, tenderhearted, & forgive one another. That is a genuine change of heart. To be kind is to be good to others, pleasant in one's demeanor, benevolent, giving. As can see, it's a general attitude, aimed toward others instead of self. Part of the old self is selfishness, focused on what's good for me. We have to battle that again & again, continually putting away selfishness. Jesus is our example, who didn't come "to be served, but to serve & to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mt.20:28). It doesn't cost anything to be kind, except a laying aside of self. Being tenderhearted is to have compassion towards one another, observing the needs & addressing them as we can, bearing one another's burdens. Obviously, the antithesis is hard-heartedness, selfish desires demanding attention. Tenderheartedness is again putting others before yourself. That's vital in the household of God. We're to walk together, being kind & compassionate toward each other; being family, concerned for each other's welfare, w/out the thought "what's in it for me?" It's significant, however, that Paul next mentioned forgiveness. That means that he knows there will be a need for it. If everyone is kind & tenderhearted toward each other, there will no need for forgiveness, but alas, we are continually battling w/this old self, which

means somewhere along the line we'll wound/offend each other. We can get bitter & be controlled by anger, or we can forgive. To forgive is to "show one's self gracious," seeking restoration of relationship. Why should we? Because we would be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (vs3). The body is considered more imp that each of its members. Now, it's debatable, but I believe the onus for forgiveness is on the one who's been offended – whether or not it is sought by the offender. Many might disagree w/that, but I think forgiveness is a choice we can make w/God's help for the sake of His glory, for the sake of the body of Christ/HofG, for the sake of the offender & for our own sake, that we might not be given over to bitterness. To forgive doesn't mean that we minimize the hurt, but rather acknowledge it & take it to God our Father. To forgive doesn't mean that we minimize the wrong of the offending party. Rather we turn them over to God, praying for their restoration not simply to us, but to Him. To forgive doesn't mean that we shouldn't seek an apology – we should, but forgiveness in my opinion, doesn't depend on an apology. Forgiveness doesn't mean that we have to trust ourselves to the one who has offended us, but we should be open to opportunities to have that trust rebuilt. I think it very imp that Paul points us to God's forgiveness of us in Christ – "forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you." I don't believe Paul is saying that we must forgive so that or because Jesus will then forgive us. Rather, we forgive because He has forgiven us. The change of heart here is the attitude that as God has done for me, so I will do. You/I could never forgive others as much as God has forgiven us, & isn't it a shame if we who have been forgiven so much refuse to forgive others? We should treat one another not just as we want them to treat us, which is the golden rule, but as God has treated us. We should not simply love one another, but love as Christ has loved us. Now, again, as said last week, it's obvious that we

struggle w/things that belong to our old self, so putting off the old self must be ongoing. Learning a new way of thinking must be ongoing. We're never too old to think new/more like Christ. And putting on the new self must be ongoing. In chap5:1-2, which we'll touch on more fully next week, Paul tells us that we should imitate God, as children who are His beloved. And, we should imitate the love of Jesus in our day to day walk. In 5:17, Paul makes it clear that we need God the Holy Spirit's help, control, guidance, filling. So examine your life by the Holy Spirit's help, consider those areas in your life right now that are really part of your old self, before you came to faith in Christ. Bring those things to God & put them away before Him, ask Him to show you the new way of thinking He desires & to help you to live new, being more like Him. We are the Household of God!