

THE BELIEVER IS TO WALK PUTTING OFF THE GARMENTS OF THE OLD PERSON EPHESIANS 04:25–32

Introduction

This is a most practical passage. When a person clothes himself, he wants to be sure to put on the right clothes. If he *dresses improperly* and puts on clothes that clash and are unacceptable, he is unacceptable and rejected by most people. Most people avoid the person who is improperly dressed, for he embarrasses them. So it is with God. There are things that we are to put on and things that we are not to put on; things that are to clothe our lives and things that are not to clothe our lives. The present passage discusses the things that are to be stripped off. The believer is to put off the garments of the old person or self.

- I. The garment of lying (v. 25).
- II. The garment of anger (vv. 26-27).
- III. The garment of stealing (v. 28).
- IV. The garment of worthless talk (v. 29).
- V. The garment of being contrary (v. 30).
- VI. The garments of unkindness (v. 31).
- VII. The garments of the new person or self (v. 32).

I. *Ephesians 04:25 Garment of Lying or Falsehood*

The believer is to strip away the garment of lying (pseudo) (see note, *False Witness*, Rom. 13:9). The word lying or falsehood means that which is false. It is untruthfulness, deception, misrepresentation, exaggeration.

1. A lie does at least three things.
 - a. Lying or falsehood misrepresents the truth. It camouflages and hides the truth. The person lied to does not know the truth; therefore, he has to act or live upon a lie. If the lie is serious, it can be very damaging:
 - => A lie about a business deal can cost money and cause terrible loss.
 - => A lie about the salvation of the gospel can cost a person the hope of eternal life.
 - => A lie about loving someone can stir emotions that lead to destruction.
 - b. Lying or falsehood deceives a person. It leads a person astray. A person deceives...
 - to get what he wants
 - to seduce someone
 - to cover up or hide something
 - to cause harm or hurt

The point to see is that lying is a deception, and deception eventually causes misunderstanding, disappointment, bewilderment, helplessness and emotional upheaval.

- c. Lying or falsehood builds a wrong relationship, a relationship built upon sinking sand. Two people cannot possibly be friends or live together if the relationship is based upon lies. Lying destroys...
- confidence • love • assurance
 - trust • security • hope
2. Scripture gives one strong reason for believers to speak only the truth: they are members of one another. Every believer is a member of the great body of people which God is building, the body of Christ, that is, the church. William Barclay has an excellent description of this point.

“We can only live in safety because the senses and the nerves pass true messages to the brain. If in fact the senses and the nerves took to passing false messages to the brain, if, for instance, they told the brain that something was cool and touchable when in fact it was hot and burning, life would very soon come to an end. A body can only function accurately and healthily when each part of it passes true messages to the brain and to the other parts. If then we are all bound into one body, that body can only function when we speak the truth. All deception impairs the working of the body of Christ” (The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, p. 184).

3. The believer is to be altogether what he says. There is to be nothing covered, nothing hid, no shame, no pretence. He is to be exactly the same before men that he is in private and the same in private that he is before men. His life is not to be a lie.

=> Lying or falsehood is one of the Ten Commandments.

Exo 20:16 *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.*

=> Lying or falsehood is one the gross sins that defile men.

Mat 15:19 *“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”*

=> Lying or falsehood takes its stand with the father of lies, the devil.

John 8:44 *“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

=> Lying or falsehood is closely associated with idolatry. It causes a person to profess something other than the truth.

Rev 21:27 *Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.*

Rev 22:15 *Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.*

=> Lying or falsehood or deceiving men is to be a characteristic of the antichrist.

2 Th 2:9 *The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders.*

=> Lying or falsehood is not what it professes to be.

1 John 2:21 *I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth.*

2 Th 2:9 *The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders.*

=> Lying or falsehood is opposed to the truth.

1 John 2:27 *As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit just as it has taught you, remain in him.*

II. **Ephesians 04:26–27** *Garment of Anger (Orgizesthe)*

The believer is to strip away the garment of anger. Men do become angry: note that Scripture recognizes this. There are times when anger is called for, but we are to guard against sinning when we become angry. Anger causes us to either react, lash out and hurt others, or else it motivates us to right wrongs and correct injustices.

1. There is wrong anger or what may be called unjustified or selfish anger.
 - a. There is the anger that broods, that is selfish. It harbours malice; it will not forget; it lingers; it broods; it wills revenge and sometimes seeks revenge.
 - b. There is the anger that holds contempt (raca). It despises; it ridicules; it arrogantly exalts self and calls another person empty and useless. This is an anger that is full of malice. It despises and scorns (raca). It arises from pride — a proud wrath (Prov. 21:24). Such feelings or anger walk over and trample a person. It says that whatever ill comes upon a person is deserved.
 - c. There is the anger that curses. It seeks to destroy a man and his reputation morally, intellectually and spiritually.
2. There is right anger or what may be called justified anger. The believer must be an angry person — angry with those who sin and do wrong and who are unjust and selfish in their behaviour. However, a justified anger is always disciplined and controlled; it is always limited to those who do wrong either against God or against others. The distinguishing mark between justified and unjustified anger is that a justified anger is never selfish; it is never shown because of what has happened to oneself. It is an anger that is purposeful. The believer knows that he is angry for a legitimate reason, and he seeks to correct the situation in the most peaceful way possible (see notes, Rom. 12:18; Jn. 2:12-16).

Eph 4:26 *“In your anger do not sin”*: *Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.*

Rom 12:18 *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

John 2:13-16 *When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"*

Thought 1. Anger is cast against many. Too often hurt feelings exist between those who are supposed to be the closest: husband and wife, parent and child, neighbour and friend, employer and employee. The Lord is clear about the matter: we must never allow anger to take hold of us without just cause.

3. Note that the devil exploits selfish anger and uses it for his own ends. He sows discord and disturbance and dissension. Paul usually prefers to use the word satnas for Satan, but here he uses diabolos. Diabolos means slanderer, a tale-bearer who murders reputations. (See notes, *Anger*, Mt. 5:21; 5:22.)

Col 3:8 *But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips.*

James 1:19 *My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.*

1 John 3:15 *Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.*

Psa 37:8 *Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret - it leads only to evil.*

Prov 14:17 *A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated.*

Prov 16:32 *Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.*

Prov 19:11 *A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.*

Eccl 7:9 *Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.*

III. **Ephesians 04:28** *Garment of Stealing*

The believer is to strip away the garment of stealing. The word "steal" (klepto) means to cheat, to take wrongfully from another person, *either legally or illegally*. Note that the laws of men are not the determining rule governing whether a person is stealing or not. This is what is so often misunderstood about stealing.

⇒ Men can sometimes use the law to steal.

⇒ Men can take from others without ever breaking a law.

⇒ Men can secure too much of something, well beyond what they need; and when they hoard, they are taking something that by nature belongs to others.

Very simply stated, the Bible teaches that stealing is the taking of anything that *rightfully* or *by nature* belongs to others. There are at least three forms of stealing.

1. A person steals by taking something which is *actually possessed* or *personally owned* by another person. If a person owns it and we take it, then we are guilty of stealing. It may be something as simple as a pencil from the office or an answer to a test from a fellow student or it may be something as complex as embezzlement of funds through bookkeeping procedures. If we take it, we have broken God's commandment and stand guilty as thieves.

Titus 2:10 *And not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.*

1 Pet 4:15 *If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal or even as a meddler.*

Prov 11:1 *The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight.*

Prov 20:14 *"It's no good, it's no good!" says the buyer; then off he goes and boasts about his purchase.*

Prov 21:6 *A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapour and a deadly snare.*

Hosea 12:7 *The merchant uses dishonest scales; he loves to defraud.*

2. A person steals by hoarding and banking more than he needs. *Keeping back* is stealing. It is...

- keeping what is not needed for one's own needs.
- keeping back what is desperately needed by others.
- taking away what nature and the earth have provided to meet the needs of the human population.
- hoarding the knowledge and gifts and blessings God gave to be used for the welfare of a desperate world filled with so many who are less privileged and gifted.

We may call it by whatever name we wish, but to God it is stealing. God has put within the earth enough resources to meet the needs of His people, and He has given men both the *ability and command to subdue and rule over the earth*. Look closely at His command:

Gen 1:28 *God blessed them and said to them [man and woman], "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

The earth is to be subdued and ruled by men. Men are commanded by God to develop the technology to explore the universe and to control nature, and to feed, clothe, house and give health to people. Note what God is saying. He is not saying some are to have the benefits and blessings of the earth. He is saying that men are to love each other and *share* the blessings of the earth together. When men use their God-given

ability to make money and produce goods, and then begin to keep back and hoard, they are stealing; they are keeping for themselves what rightfully belongs to others. Therefore, they will suffer catastrophic loss in the next world. They will suffer total devastation (Lk. 12:20; 16:22-23). Why? Because they did not *love enough* to do what they and their particular talents were put on earth to do: provide for those who were less gifted and less fortunate.

Mat 6:19 *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Luke 3:13 *“Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.*

Eph 4:28 *He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.*

1 Tim 6:9 *People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

1 Tim 6:17-19 *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

Ezek 22:12 *In you men accept bribes to shed blood; you take usury and excessive interest and make unjust gain from your neighbours by extortion. And you have forgotten me, declares the Sovereign Lord.*

3. A person steals by living extravagantly, beyond what he needs. There are some who give to meet the crying needs of the world, yet they do not live sacrificially. They *keep plenty* for themselves, indulging their flesh (sinful nature)...

- in clothing
- in transportation
- in food
- in recreation
- in jewellery
- in possessions
- in housing
- in property

Many within industrialized nations are guilty of *selfishness* despite a tenderness and concern for the needy in the world. However, *concern and some giving* are not enough to fulfil the demand of God that we share and meet the needs of our fellow men throughout the world. Every day that we awaken and arise out of bed, the world is reeling under the weight of *masses*...

- who are hungry and starving to death.
- who are without drinking water.
- who are without adequate clothing.
- who are diseased and without medicine.

- who have no roof over their heads.
- who have no one to teach them.

There is no question, the means to help meet the needs of the world exist today. The lack is not manpower and resources; the lack is *sacrificial commitment* to give the resources and to go and become personally involved. The extravagant and indulgent are stealing from the needy, and the gifted are not meeting the needs of the less gifted. The scene is tragic, for God put the gifted upon earth to *sacrificially* meet the needs of the less gifted. But instead of meeting their needs, the gifted are living in excessive comfort and pleasure, indulging the whims of their flesh (sinful nature).

Mat 19:21-23 *Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor; and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

Mat 23:25 *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence."*

Mark 4:19 *"But the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful."*

Luke 12:33 *"Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys."*

Amos 5:11 *You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine.*

What is the answer? Diligent work — working and working so that we can have enough to help others. This is the will of God: working in order to have enough to give away. Work is to be honest and to meet the necessities of one's family; however, working just for self is selfish. And selfishness corrupts and leaves a person's heart and work empty and aimless. But working in order to help others in the name of Christ — this is the will of God. This is the only way the needs of the world can be met. Work is to be for the Lord's purpose and cause — the cause that provides the means to reach and to help people (1 Jn. 3:17). (See note, *Steal*, Rom. 13:9.)

IV. Ephesians 04:29 Garment of Worthless Talk

The believer is to strip away filthy and foul talk. The word *unwholesome* (sapros) means rotten, foul, putrid and polluting. Unwholesome talk, of course, would include cursing and unholy talk and even the worthless conversation that is so often carried on by people. The Amplified New Testament has a good description.

Eph 4:29 *"Let no foul or polluting language, nor evil word, nor unwholesome or worthless talk [ever] come out of your mouth."*

Scripture says that a man with a foul mouth has a mouth that is “an open grave” (Rom. 3:13). An open grave is foul, and it is a symbol of corruption. So is a man with a sinful mouth. His mouth is...

- foul
- detestable
- dirty
- profane
- dishonourable
- obscene
- polluted
- offensive
- filthy

The obscene mouth may range from off-coloured humour to dirty jokes, from immoral suggestions to outright propositions for sex. But no matter, a man with a foul mouth stinks just like an open grave; his filthiness causes corruption, the decay of character. The filth from his mouth eats and eats away at his character and at the character of his listeners — so much so that he becomes as offensive as that of a decayed corpse. The foul, filthy mouth kills character, its attractiveness, trust, faithfulness, morality, honour and godliness.

***Mat 12:34** “You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.”*

***James 3:6** The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

***Prov 24:2** For their hearts plot violence, and their lips talk about making trouble.*

The believer is to speak only that which is good and which will edify or build up people. Speech is for the purpose...

- of sharing good things.
- of building up and strengthening people.
- of ministering grace (favour, blessings) and helping each other as we plough through life.

***Luke 24:32** They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”*

***Eph 5:19** Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.*

***Job 6:25** How painful are honest words! But what do your arguments prove?*

***Psa 141:3** Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.*

***Psa 145:11** They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might.*

***Prov 16:24** Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.*

***Eccl 10:12** Words from a wise man’s mouth are gracious, but a fool is consumed by his own lips.*

***Isa 50:4** The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.*

Mal 3:16 *Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honoured his name.*

V. **Ephesians 04:30** *Grieving the Holy Spirit*

The believer is to strip away the garment of being contrary or of grieving the Holy Spirit. “Grieving” (lupeite) means to pain; to offend; to vex; to sadden the Holy Spirit. When a child acts contrary to the counsel of his parents, he hurts and grieves them. So when a person acts contrary to the counsel of the Holy Spirit, he hurts and grieves Him. Note three points.

1. The command is forceful, very forceful. This is seen in the name of the Holy Spirit. He is not only called the Holy Spirit here, He is called both the Holy Spirit and “the Spirit of God” — a double reference.

2. There are at least four ways the Holy Spirit can be grieved.

a. He is *grieved* when believers allow impure things to penetrate their life or thoughts.

Rom 8:5-7 *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.*

b. He is *grieved* when believers behave immorally.

Rom 8:12-13 *Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

c. He is *grieved* when believers act unjustly.

Acts 5:3-4 *Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.”*

d. He is *grieved* when believers participate in anything contrary to the nature of the Holy Spirit. Note the context of this passage: the command to “not grieve the Holy Spirit” is surrounded by a series of negative commands.

Rom 8:8-10 *Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.*

3. The reason we should not grieve the Spirit of God is because of His great ministry to us: He has sealed us until the day of redemption (see note, *Holy Spirit, Seal*, Eph. 1:13-14).

VI. *Ephesians 04:31 Garment of Unkindness*

The believer is to strip off the garment of unkindness.

1. There is *bitterness* (pikria): resentment, harshness. A man who is bitter is often...
 - sharp • stressful • resentful • intense
 - cynical • relentless • cold • distasteful
 - harsh • unpleasant

Any expression involving any of these is sin to God. God desires men to be filled with love and joy and peace and to express such. Anything less than the expression of these is sin.

2. There is *rage* (thumos): (see note, *Wrath, Rage*, pt. 9, Gal. 5:19-21).
3. There is *anger* (orge): (see note, *Anger*, Eph. 4:26-27).
4. There is *brawling* (krauge): arguing, fussing, quarrelling. It means insulting, boisterous behaviour and loud talking.
5. There is *evil speaking* (blasphemia): slander, blasphemy, malicious talk; to speak against God, to insult.
6. There is *malice* (kakias): slander, hurtful, injurious speech.

VII. *Ephesians 04:32 Garment of the New Person*

The believer is to put on the garments of the new person. Frankly, this verse speaks for itself more forcefully than any commentary ever could.

1. The word *kind* means to be gentle, caring, helpful, courteous, good, useful, giving and showering favours upon people. It is the opposite of being neglectful, harsh, sharp, bitter and resentful. Lehman Strauss points out that kindness comes from such words as *kin* and *kindred* which means that it treats a person as one's own kin. Believers are brothers in the Lord (*Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 189).

Rom 12:10 *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves.*

Col 3:12 *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

2. The word *compassionate* means to show compassion, mercy, understanding, love, tenderness and warmth. It means to *be aware* of a person's hurts and sufferings, problems and difficulties, emotions and mental state, physical and spiritual condition. It means to be tender-hearted toward them.

Mat 05:7 *"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."*

Luke 6:36 *“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”*

John 13:35 *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

Rom 12:9 *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

1 Th 3:12 *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.*

1 Pet 1:22 *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*

3. The word *forgiving* means to be gracious to a person, to pardon him for some wrong done. Note that the person has done wrong; he has hurt and caused us pain. But the command is to still forgive him.
4. The reason we should forgive each other is because God has forgiven us. No matter how much a person has done against us, it does not come close to what we have done against God. Yet, God has forgiven us. Why? For Christ’s sake. Jesus Christ died for us — died for our sins so that we could be forgiven. Therefore, God forgives us. No matter what we have done, God forgives us when we want forgiveness. He forgives us despite our having rejected, cursed, ignored, neglected and rebelled against Him. The point is this: because of what Christ has done for us, we should forgive others no matter what they have done.

Mat 11:25 *At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.”*

Luke 6:35-36 *“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”*

Luke 17:4 *“If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”*

Eph 4:32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Col 3:13 *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ■*