



“Let’s Rise as Healthy Members”

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

June 6, 2021

Good morning! We are now going to open up the Word of God, the Bible, that the Spirit of Jesus might be speaking into our church and into our lives. We are going to be in Ephesians Chapter 4 in a few moments.

We continue in our series titled *O Church, Arise*. This morning we see grace from the Lord that we may rise up together as healthy members of the body of Christ. From the beginning to the end, the book of Ephesians emphasizes that the church is the body of Christ. Five of the six chapters of Ephesians pictures the church as such.

The illustration is that Christ is the head of the body and we, the members of His church, the people who belong to Him and who have come to Him by faith in His shed blood, we are the different parts of the body. We are arms, the legs, the biceps, the quadriceps, the lungs. We are all the different parts and we all have a function to play by the working of God through us to build up the church.

As we consider what is before us in Scripture this morning, I want to bring to you the reminder that bodies can be harmed. Have you ever noticed that with your physical body? Your body can be harmed. And it can be harmed by forces coming from the outside or coming from within.

You can be hurt by something that strikes you from the outside. You can get hit by a car, and that is going to do some damage. You can have your leg bitten by a shark if you are surfing in the Pacific Ocean. You can be harmed by a frying pan to the forehead if you ask what’s for dinner one more time before your wife has prepared the dinner menu, or for assuming that she is going to be the one making the dinner and not you.

We can take a blow from the outside but in addition to that, there are forces even within the human body that can do damage. My wife has a background in health care. Last night she was telling me about a spectrum of diseases called autoimmune diseases. In the cases of these kinds of diseases, the body’s immune system start attacking its own healthy cells. This is the case with things like type one diabetes, multiple sclerosis, lupus, celiac disease and arthritis.

A body can start doing damage to its own parts. So damage can be done to a physical body and there is a sense in which damage can be done to a church body as well. A church can be wounded. Those forces that do harm can come from the outside. That is what we have been seeing emphasized in our consideration of Ephesians Chapter 4 thus far. We have been told about waves of doctrine, of false doctrine, that can pound members of the body of Christ.

This text has also described a darkened world around us, infected with sin under the dominion of Satan. There are depraved forms of behavior that are celebrated. We can drift off into these things. We could be influence by these things, or we can be harmed by people who are convinced of them.

There is damage that can be inflicted from the outside of the church, but this morning as we dig into what is before us now, we must understand that damage can also come from within the body of Christ.

While it might be easy for us to identify the fact that there are sinful powers at work in the world around us, we must be honest and deal with the fact that we are all struggling with the sin within us too.

Hallelujah and praise God that in Christ the power and dominion of sin has been severed. However, its lingering presence remains. I can tell you about the people that are sitting around you right now at Bethel Grace, we are all still struggling with various areas of temptation and sin.

We have got to take caution and care in the grace and in the power of the Lord that we be aware of how we can do damage to ourselves from within. The text before us will be speaking to us about some of the relational, emotional, and verbal maladies that we need to be concerned about here within our own church family, that we don't eat ourselves up from the inside.

If we want to rise up as a healthy church we need grace from God for sanctification over the sin that still is at work. So we dig in with humble hearts, confident in the power of Jesus Christ to help us grow and be healthy.

Let's take a look at what is here for us; what God has for us today from Ephesians Chapter 4 and Verses 25 through Chapter 5 and Verse 2:

²⁵Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

⁵Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Brothers and sisters, we have this rich instruction from the heart of God through a loving apostle into our lives today. It is filled with instruction from the Lord to create and maintain health and vitality in the local body of Christ, namely for purposes in us here at Bethel Grace. This is God's Word to us this morning.

Understand, as we think about the health of the church, and our Lord Jesus and how He is pictured for us in this chapter and through the book of Ephesians, it is not like He is like a fitness coach who is separate from us. Or like a weight trainer or drill Sargent who is pounding into us, You do this! You do this! You do this!

That is not the imagery that is given to us here in this lovely and sacred chapter. Instead, Christ is the head. We are His body and we live out what is here in vital union with Jesus, who empowers it all as we are those who are attached to Him.

So hallelujah that Jesus is with us. Jesus is present. He is here and these are the things that He wants to cause to rise up within us for our health and for our good and for His glory. This is God's work within us.

Many have noted that the book of Ephesians divides very neatly and wonderfully in to two sections. You have Chapters 1 through 3, then there are Chapters 4 through 6. There is a very doctrinal section, then a very practical section.

In Chapters 1 through 3, we have the marvelous saving grace of God through Jesus Christ. Then in Chapters 4 through 6, we see the outworking of it in lives transformed by His grace. However, brothers and sisters, understand that the message of the book of Ephesians is not Chapters 1 through 3, like this is what God has done, now you do the rest!

No! Not for a nanosecond. Chapters 1 through 3 is the glory of what God has done in our salvation, church. He has chosen us. He has cleansed us. He has redeemed us. He has regenerated us. These are realities that God has worked for our salvation.

Then Chapters 4 through 6 shows what God is continuing to do in us. Here is what Christ is empowering in His church. Here is Christ continuing His work of grace in us. So we do everything that is here in the love and the power of our Messiah, apart from whom we can do nothing.

With all of this in view, let's talk about four factors contributing to our health as a church. Health as the body of Christ. First, health in the body of Christ as seen in this paragraph that we just read is a matter of:

1. How we speak the truth (4:25, 29)

Falsehood does harm. Speaking truth brings health. Therefore, we speak truth to one another. Second, health in the body of Christ is a matter of:

2. How we handle anger (4:26-27, 29-31)

This has a lot to do with the surge of angry emotions that Christians can and will experience. Anger and bitter anger does harm. Whereas, in contrast to that there, is kindness that heals. Kindness brings good into the body of Christ. Third, health in the body of Christ is a matter of:

3. How we practice generosity (4:28)

Greed and covetousness does harm in the body of Christ. Generosity and giving hands do good. Finally, health in the body of Christ is a matter of:

4. How we give abounding grace (4:32-5:2)

Grudges do harm, and the giving of grace brings healing.

All of these points are factors in each and every local church for its health and its good and its growth. I will only be able to elaborate on the first two points this morning, so let's begin by looking at what it says in Verse 25. Health in the body of Christ is a matter of:

1. How we speak the truth (4:25, 29)

We see this in Verse 25 very clearly laid out for us.

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

This is speaking of people in general like neighbors. Then it gets specific to the local church when it starts talking about us being vitally connected as members of a body.

We must speak truth to one another in the church. For those of you who have been with us the past month or so for our teaching in Ephesians Chapter 4, this verse that we just read is very much connected to what we studied a couple of weeks back in Verse 15, where it says that we are to speak the truth to one another in love.

It is truthing in love. It takes the Greek word *alitheia*, a noun for truth, and it turns it into a verb. We are people to be truthing in love with one another. We understood that in a very comprehensive sense.

Similarly, Verse 25 must be understood in a comprehensive way. We are to speak the truth to one another in terms of world view and in terms of our personal lives. We are to be speaking truth to each other.

In terms of world view, we must keep in mind that the Ephesian church was dwelling together under the shadow of a gigantic statue of an idol that was called Diana or Artemus. Many of those Gentiles, probably most of them, were saved out of the worship of this false deity.

The doctrine related to it was engrained into their world view and Paul was telling them, You have to put that off. You have to let that go. And you, church, need to be speaking to one another about the truth that is in Christ Jesus.

Similarly, here in the Twenty-First Century California there are many world views that have very much influenced us—postmodern world view, where truth is subjective. You have your truth. He has his truth. She has her truth. Truth is in the eye of the beholder.

We have to put that aside and immerse ourselves in the truth that is in Christ Jesus. Postmodernism has to go. Truth about Christ needs to come. You can go into all kinds of different facets of this with naturalism, with legalism, with all kinds of different things. We need to speak Gospel truth to one another, the truth that is in Christ Jesus. So at the world view level, this is all about truthing in love in that way.

But this is also so very true at the personal level. We need to speak truths to one another and be open and honest with each other as vitally connected members of one body of just how we are doing in life. Where we are struggling. What the challenges are. Where we are tempted to fall into sin.

As a household of grace, we need to speak truth to one another and not cover things up in falsehood. This is for the healing of the church and for the health of the church. Paul said the rationale for this is that we are members one of another.

Imagine if there was a foot and gangrene was starting to spread across the toes. Then that foot said to the rest of the body, Aah, no, no! Nothing is going on. No big deal. Everything will be okay. What?!? No! What is spreading across the toe will eventually effect the health of the whole.

Maybe there are a few little cancer cells growing on the lung, but the lungs say, No, I am really find. Nothing's going on. There is nothing to see here. That is not good! The health of the part has to do with the health of the many.

So with grace the church body is concerned about helping one another to have power over the various ways that sin afflicts us still. We need to be honest and open with one another in communities of very intimate fellowship in places where we are connected with a few brothers and sisters, where we are opening our lives and talking to each other about struggles in trusted communion with each other.

Imagine there is one sister in the Lord who is frustrated to no end with a manipulative family member. Maybe there is a dispute going on in the family about property or whatever. This sister is boiling up inside because there is wrong happening. It's frustrating and consuming. Yet in the fellowship of the sisters, she says, No. I'm fine. Everything is good. No problems whatsoever. While she is living with a chronic twitch in her eye and a wrist that shakes from nerves.

Rather, this sister should be saying, I am frustrated and I need prayer and I need you to help. I need to unload some of this and I need you to pray that I will manage this before the Lord by the power of His Spirit.

There is a brother in our midst being drawn back to the screen and its explicit images. It is a struggle and he hates it. It is something that keeps pulling him. He has faltered and failed and he feels the grief and guilt of that inside of him.

Yet he gathers with brothers who asks him how he is doing. He responds, I am great. Never better. Just fine. Things are great at work. Everything is good. Meanwhile, remaining hidden within is the guilt and the temptation and the power of this sin.

In the body of Christ, we need to be a house of grace where we can speak to each other about the struggles that we have. Believe me, brothers and sisters, the struggles with sin that tempt us are so diverse, even in our church family. So, we must be Bethel Grace—the house of God’s grace church, where we give each other grace.

We hide things from each other because we are so worried about what others are going think about us when in fact that other person is going to have such mercy as they are filled with the Holy Spirit, and they will want to help us. That is how it works.

We need to put away falsehood and speak truth to one another at the worldview level and at the personal level. We are all struggling with something. There are various areas of temptation that just seem to be those dogged areas that just get at us.

Meanwhile, sin is like a vampire. I know vampires are fictitious but just go with me on this illustration. How is sin like a vampire? Two ways. First, it sucks the life out of you! But, alas, that is not the only way that sin is like a vampire. What happens when a vampire is in daylight? The light kills it.

Likewise, there is something about bringing sin into the light where it’s power is dramatically lessened. When was the last time you got close to a brother or a sister and said, Hey, I’m struggling with something. I need for you to know about it and pray for me. When was the last time you had a conversation like that?

With some of you it might have been very recent. With some of you it might have been so long ago that you can’t remember. When was the last time you had a conversation like that. Then, a connected question: when was the last time you were struggling with temptation? In a healthy church, there needs to be this connection between the two.

Pray for Gospel community. Pray that it will be amongst our leaders. Pray that it will be amongst our members. Pray that it will be all throughout the church, where we can be honest with the fact that we are carrying heavy things within us; temptations within us; stumbling into sin, because that is the reality. It is as we share with one another that the power of Jesus starts increasing so that sanctification grows. That holiness of life is expanded and increased. That is a good thing!

Health in the church is about how we speak truth to one another in multiple ways. We continue and we see that there is another prominent present factor in this text. One area that many

Christians will struggle with is in the area of anger and resentment and bitterness and frustration in ways that they turn sour.

Did you notice the language of this throughout this text? We need to put those qualities off and be increasing in something else by the work of Jesus instead. The health of the body of Christ is a matter of:

2. How we handle anger (4:25-27; 29-31)

It says in Verse 26:

²⁶Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and give no opportunity to the devil.

So we see as Paul quoted Psalm 4 that it is not necessarily a sin to be angry. There is such a thing as righteous indignation. Christ displayed righteous indignation on multiple occasions. Anger is actually the right response to many of the abuses and the evils that fill this world.

On multiple occasions, we see Christ expressing righteous indignation, but here is the thing, even though we are connected to Christ, we are not Christ. So we must be somewhat leery of our expressions of righteous indignation because there is also unrighteous anger that we are very much susceptible to.

We are not to have this kind of unrighteous anger inside of us. So what is this unrighteous anger like, the kind of anger that we must be careful to put away from us? I think sinful anger typically has to do with wounded pride.

There is somebody who does not think as highly of you as you think they ought to be thinking of you. They ought to be giving more respect and regard than you think that they have given. Somehow, maybe they have been dismissive of you in some way. And there can be the sense in which the ego gets wounded and we get sour and upset about it.

We probably all experience this multiple times in our lives. Did you notice that how in the thought world so many things can be triggered inside of us as we are certain that so and so was saying such and such to such a person? Sometimes just in our thought world there can be this fiction that gets all worked up in our minds.

Then we start stewing over these things. Anger can be such a tricky thing and we must be careful about it. Verse 25 tells us, Don't let the sun go down on your anger. When something is starting to churn with resentment inside of us, when we are taking things personally, there is the sense in which we must deal with it and we must deal with it very, very soon. Don't let the sun go down on that kind of sour, vindictive anger.

Notice that this text does not say that we need to go and immediately approach that person with reconciliation. That's not what it says. It says, Don't let the sun go down on your anger. It's not here giving us a command to deal with that other person. This is giving us a command to deal with our own heart in the presence of the Lord.

We remember that we are connected to Jesus, who loves us and who empowers us and heals us and transforms us. What you may find as you take the sourness before the Lord is that you might end up understanding that what you were so upset about was something that you didn't really need to be upset about at all.

So there is the sense in which we go before the Lord and say, Lord, search me and try me and heal these surges that are going on inside of me. Then if we do find that there has been a legitimate offense with another person, after we have cooled our jets before the Lord, maybe we have the ability to work it out in a more beneficial way.

All of this needs to be worked out in the presence of the Lord. We must understand that our anger can so often be unrighteous. We must be careful with it and we must deal with it before the Lord, because this kind of anger is the devil's foothold in many lives. It gives the devil the opportunity.

The emotional world and the world of the thought life is a satanic battleground. Satan is the father of lies. He is the father of lies in many ways, not just in the doctrinal way but also in the relational world. Satan can just stir things up and we must understand this about ourselves.

Do you remember how we were talking about autoimmune diseases? How things from within can do harm? Sometimes our own thought life just needs to be taken captive by the grace of God. I think it's in the spirit of this that the text goes on to say in Verse 29:

²⁹Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Once again, this is talking about the believer's use of the capacity of speech and having that controlled by the Holy Spirit. Understand that this is something that applies very broadly to how we use our ability to communicate, but it is vitally important during those times when there is bitterness festering inside of us because if there was any time where we might be prone to use corrupting speech, that might be the time.

This verse says:

²⁹Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion

The word *corrupting* is that which is itself rotten and disseminates rottenness. This same word for corrupting was used in the ancient Greek world for rotten fruit or fish. Have you ever noticed how fruit left to itself too long can get really, really nasty?

I say that to you as an absolute lover of fruits, and increasingly so of vegetables too. Right now we are growing tomatoes in our backyard. We love tomatoes. I will eat tomatoes all day long. Last year we started growing tomatoes for the first time and we had so many tomatoes that I was eating them like fruit, just pulling them off the vine and eating them.

This year we are also growing zucchini. Nobody told me that zucchini plants are like monsters that grow enormously with prickly leaves. What I noticed just this weekend is that several portions of the zucchini fell off to the soil and was mushy and gooey and gross.

Likewise, corrupting talk has to do with that which is putrid. Speaking to the body of Christ, Paul was saying, Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths. How much of it is allowed? None! When the Holy Spirit is filling us, none is going to come out. It is our own fallen flesh that we have to struggle with.

There was an article years ago in US News and World Report for the purposes of premarital counseling. They did a twenty-year study about couples that are relatively healthy. What these experts found is that the healthy couples have a ratio of positive to negative forms of communication.

The ratio ended up being something like five to one. If your ratio is five positive for every one negative, then you will probably be in good shape. Will the Lord say that sounds like a pretty good plan? Five to one! But this verse says, Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth. Yet corrupting talk does in fact come natural to us when we are not under the control of the Holy Spirit.

So constantly we need to go back to the Lord, saying, Lord, here is my condition. Here is where I can fail. Here is where I need You to fill my life. And Jesus, who has grace, will do it. We are connected to the King! We are connected to the One who is the Word, the Word made flesh. Jesus is the One who will empower us in our communication as we go to Him for help. By the Spirit of Jesus, our speech will be sanctified.

How interesting that in connection to this issue of speech we this statement:

³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

The Holy Spirit is the One who inspired Scripture. The Holy Spirit is the One who has produced through human beings words of life contained for us in the pages of Scripture. While our words don't carry the same kind of apostolic and prophetic authority that has been preserved for us here in the pages of Scripture, we have words that do have effect on other people.

There is so much power in what we say, and we keep going back to the Lord, saying, Renew me. Work through me that my capacity for speech will build people up and strengthen them rather than wither them.

Pray for eyes to see how you can be speaking life and encouragement into your brothers and sisters in Christ. Yes, sometimes this will be a matter of dealing with areas of sin, but what should be very clear as we are dealing with areas of sin is that we do so in a spirit of grace. One sinner to another, those of us being sanctified by the love of the Lord in our lives.

If we are going to be healthy and strong as a church, the Spirit of God is going to be renewing the way that we speak to each other, and we are not going to be devouring and causing each other to wilt. Instead, the Spirit is going to be helping us to build each other up.

Now, I think I can hear the motor boats running throughout the church right now. Do you know about the motor boats? But, but, but, but, but, but, but, but, but! But, Pastor Jeff, you don't know the person that I'm dealing with right now. If you just knew what a jerk of a jack weasel this person was! Not only are they irritating and obnoxious, but they are mean as well. They do harm! Do you expect me to speak life-giving grace into them? I want them to wither!

Let's be humble here, because these tendencies are in us and can rise up powerfully. But just keep this mind: if you have such a person that is in your life right now, you understand that you have a person who is in great, great need of the grace of God in their life. You have a person that is not experiencing the joy of the Lord. The well of worship is running dry. Their soul is not replenished in the things of the Lord.

So maybe the gracious speech that comes from the Spirit working through you in response to someone's nastiness will be that which triggers some life in them. Keep this in mind: as you are dealing with someone that has been sour, you don't know everything that has happened in their lives.

You don't know the profound disappointments that they might be carrying. You don't know all of the abuses that they may have endured. You don't know the scars that they are carrying and maybe if we had such perspective, this would really help us in the grace that we give.

So the Word says:

³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

⁵Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

However people around you are responding to you, you remember who you are in Christ. You remember how you are joined to the One who has loved you with immeasurable and insearchable love. Follower of Christ, remember the One that you are connected to.

As we have this view of Jesus, the great lover of our souls, the Spirit of Jesus is going to empower us to see the people that have been so draining with a new perspective because the life that we need, we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus wants to heal the bitterness that rises up inside of us. For the sake of the peace and health of the body of Christ, we need to say, Lord, take me in the direction that You are leading me in and help me to walk in Your ways.

With this, let's close in a word of prayer.