

Saint Timothy Lutheran – Edmonds, WA

February 28, 2010 – Rev. Craig A. Patterson

“Can We Do Otherwise?”

(Text: Ephesians 4:32)

Context: In this letter to the “saints who are at Ephesus,” the Apostle Paul writes in a most tender manner. Paul writes of God’s purpose and power. He speaks of the glory and headship of Christ. Then, he prays that Christians may realize God’s purpose and power. He goes on to describe how God is actively fulfilling His purpose among them. God has provided salvation by grace through faith in Christ. God reconciles and unites Jews and Gentiles into one Body of Christ. All differences are set a side in Christ. God gives believers help in fulfilling His purpose for them. God gives unity, maturity, and renewal to individual Christians. He assists believers to think of others first in marriage, in the parent-child relationships, between slaves and masters, and, generally, between oneself and one’s neighbor. This includes forgiving others “just as God in Christ has forgiven you.”

I. **The World Does Not, And Cannot, Live In A Way So As To Reflect God’s Purpose And Power.**

- A. The unbelievers’ hearts and minds are darkened, dead toward God.
- B. Self-justification for all and any behavior is practiced.
- C. Blaming others and shifting blame is a common practice.

* Looking out for one’s own interests dominates people’s lives. (Loves grows cold-Mt.24:12)

* Various theories exist on how to please an “All-Mighty” or they ignore the All-Mighty.

* Paul implores the Ephesian believers, “that you walk no longer as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind.” (4:17)

1. Paul describes the Gentile manner of walking, living, as including “being darkened in their understanding,...ignorance,...hardness of their heart,...giving themselves to sensuality, ...impurity with greediness.” (4:17-19)

2. He then writes, “But you did not learn Christ in this way” (4:20).

II. **As Redeemed Children Of God In Christ, God Renews Us From The Inside Out.**

A. We are renewed in the spirit of our minds (via God’s Word and Holy Spirit).

B. We put on the “new self” created in the likeness of God (in righteousness and holiness of truth).

1. We lay aside falsehood and speak truth with our neighbors.

2. We encounter anger, but do not sin.

3. We steal no more, but labor hard with our own hands.

4. We speak no “unwholesome word” from our mouths, but speak words of grace that edify those who hear us.

5. We do not grieve (make sad) the Holy Spirit with our behavior.

6. We let bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice be put away from us, far away.

7. We are kind, tender-hearted, forgiving each other ***just as God in Christ has forgiven us.***

C. We love (and forgive) because God has loved us first. (I John 4:19)

1. “The moment a man wrongs me, I must forgive him....Whether the man repents, makes amends, asks my pardon or not, makes no difference. I have instantly forgiven him. He must face God with the wrong he has done; but that is his affair and God’s and not mine save that in the case he is a brother (Mt.18:15)...The fact that God forgave your sins and mine “in connection with Christ” is the compelling motive for our forgiving every man who in any way sins against us.” (Lenski, pp. 588, 589)