

“So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Therefore, laying aside falsehood, **SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR**, for we are members of one another. **BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN**; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” Ephesians 4:17-32, NAS95.

A. Walking worthy of our calling 4:1-5:21

In unity 4:1-16 and in holiness 4:17-32

Following his emphasis on both the unity and diversity within the body of Christ and how the many gifts of the Spirit serve each end, Paul now turns to describe the moral features of a life that is worthy of the calling with which we have been called. He will first lay out the foundation for such a life (vv. 17-24) and then its many features (vv. 25-32).

a. its foundation 4:17-24

1) the command: don't live as the Gentiles do 4:17-19

The "therefore" with which v. 17 begins and picks up where he left off in 4:1-3. In the latter text he encouraged his readers to "walk worthily of their calling." Beginning with v. 17 he describes a particular kind of "walk" that they must studiously and strenuously avoid. They simply cannot continue in a lifestyle characteristic of their past as if none of the things mentioned in Eph. 1-3 ever happened.

Paul's urgent plea is issued "in the Lord" (not "with the Lord", as the NASB). Paul

"speaks as one who had access to the mind of Christ, knew his will, and could therefore speak in his name" (Hodge, 248).

The use of the word "Gentiles" (ethne, from which derive our word "ethnic") must be explained. Paul earlier called his readers "you Gentiles" (3:1), an ethically neutral term pointing to their ethnic heritage as non-Jews. In 2:11 he referred to them as "you Gentiles in the flesh" but only in order to say that if they believe in Christ such an ethnic distinction is spiritually irrelevant. Here in 4:17 "the Gentiles" stands for all non-Jewish outsiders to the Christian community. It is a synonym for unbeliever. Thus, Gentiles are urged not to live like Gentiles, or Gentile Christians are urged not to live like Gentile non-Christians.

The portrait Paul paints of their life outside of Christ is grim indeed:

* They walk "in the futility of their mind" (v. 17b). The word "futile" means empty, characterized by folly and pointlessness (cf. Rom. 1:21; 1 Pt. 1:18). Such behavior yields no lasting satisfaction. Says Hendriksen: "All those endeavors which the Gentiles put forth in order to attain happiness end in disappointment. Their life is one long series of mocked expectations" (209).

* They are also "darkened in their understanding" (v. 18a). The verb translated "darkened" is used in the NT only elsewhere in Rev. 9:2; 16:10. "The light has gone out in the seat of Gentiles understanding so that they are no longer capable of apprehending ultimate truth. There is a clear contrast with believers, who have been given knowledge and the eyes of whose hearts have been enlightened" (Lincoln, 277). This is a stunning statement, given the universal belief among non-Christians that they are enlightened and discerning and insightful into the meaning of life and its values! Note how critical Paul regards the status of the "mind" or "understanding."

* They have also been "excluded" (or alienated) from the life of God (v. 18b). This cannot be a reference to God's own life or to physical life but rather that eternal, spiritual life that God alone can bestow. This is one reason why Paul earlier referred to unbelievers as "dead in trespasses and sins" (2:1). No matter how vital, healthy, active,

happy, productive, and inventive people may be, if they do not know Jesus they are severed from the only life that is truly and eternally life. Paul "is not thinking of some kind of alienation which psychiatrists could cure. What is required is not psychological treatment but something wholly new, a new being (v. 24) (Best, 420). Paul then proceeds to give two reasons for this condition.

(1) It is "because of the ignorance that is in them" (v. 18c). Ignorance is no excuse for unbelief. These Gentiles are morally culpable for their ignorance (see Rom. 1:18-23). They cannot blame their ignorance on anyone other than themselves, for this ignorance has its roots in their own minds (it is "in" or "within them").

(2) It is "because of the hardness of their heart" (v. 18d). Says Lincoln, "at the center of their thinking, feeling, and volition, they have hardened themselves to God and to the knowledge of him that was available to them" (278). This word "hardness" is often used in the NT to describe the condition of the unbelieving heart (see Mark 3:5; 6:52; 8:17; John 12:40; cf. also Rom. 11:7,25; 2 Cor. 3:14). He has in view an insensitivity, an obtuseness, a stubborn, willful resistance to the truth of the gospel. Apart from God's grace they will remain spiritually impervious to the truth.

This word translated "hardness" (*poros*) was used in the ancient world by medical authors to describe a callous or ossification which serves as a mortar to unite the portions of a fractured bone.

* If that were not enough, they have become "callous" (v. 19a). The word translated by the NASB as "callous" means to cease to feel pain and thus in this context to lack moral sensitivity, an inability to feel shame, an inability to blush, a loss of emotional or spiritual capacity to feel embarrassed for one's conduct. "Their consciences are so atrophied that sin registers no stab of pain" (EBC, 61). The consequences of this rigidity of soul are then described:

(1) Note first that they are portrayed as fully and freely responsible for this condition. They "have given themselves over" to the behavior described. The moral evil of their souls is not something that has overtaken them contrary to their consent but

is the product of their own selfish and sinful volition. Persistence in this chosen course of action may well lead to "God giving them over" (cf. Rom. 1:24-32) to a yet deeper and now well-deserved cultivation and aggravation of their sin.

(2) Their evil orientation is characterized by two sins in particular: "sensuality" (aselgeia) and "impurity" (akatharsia). These terms often appear together in catalogues of vices and refer to debauchery, licentiousness, lewdness, and unrestrained sexual behavior. Such people flaunt their sin and have no regard for the feelings of others or public decency. Note that Paul says they engage in "every kind of impurity," i.e., more than merely sexual impurity. He then characterizes their sensuality and impurity as having been pursued "with greed" or "with covetousness" (pleonexia; cf. Mark 7:22; 1 Cor. 5:10,11; Rom. 1:29; Col. 3:5; 2 Pt. 2:3). The idea here seems to be that they never get enough sensual and impure activity; their hunger for sin is a bottomless pit; they are never satisfied, always aching and desperate and lusting for more. They are insatiably greedy for sin, compelled by their own wickedness to find new perversions to replace the old.

Charles Hodge summarizes Paul's thought in vv. 17-19:

"Here as in Rom. 1:24, immorality is connected with impiety as its inevitable consequence. Men in their folly think that morality may be preserved without religion, and even that morality is religion; but reason, experience and Scripture all prove that if men do not love and fear God they give themselves up to vice in some form, and commonly either to uncleanness or avarice. There is a two-fold reason for this; one is the nature of the soul which has no independent source of goodness in itself, so that if it turns from God it sinks into pollution, and the other is the punitive justice of God. He abandons those who abandon him" (251).

2) the contrast: rather, live as new creatures in Christ 4:20-24

The life to which Paul calls his readers (and us) is one that is commensurate with and reflective of our experience of Christ, described by Paul with three phrases.

First, "you did not learn Christ in this way" (v. 20). The particular phraseology, "to

learn a person," appears nowhere else in the NT (after all, subjects are learned, not people). Here the name "Christ" stands for the truth, the tradition, the substance about Christ, i.e., the essence of the Christian gospel (cf. Col. 2:6-7). But "learning Christ" refers to more than mere intellectual indoctrination about him. Paul has in view being shaped and fashioned by a personal relationship with him.

Second, they have "heard Him" (v. 21a). The words rendered "if indeed" (*ei ge*) imply confident assumption, not doubt or uncertainty (see the same words in 3:2). Some have argued that Paul means to say that we heard Christ himself in the voice of those who proclaimed him or taught him to us. In view of the next phrase, Paul probably is referring here to our initial reception of the gospel message (cf. Rom. 10:14; 15:21; Col. 1:6,23).

Third, they have been "taught in Him" (v. 21b). This refers to our on-going instruction in the Christian faith, particularly our knowledge of Jesus (see 4:12-16, esp. v. 13).

What is the meaning of the phrase, 'just as truth is in Jesus (v. 21c)? It is interesting that this is the only place in Ephesians where Paul uses the name "Jesus" alone (he referred to "the Lord Jesus" in 1:15; Paul elsewhere uses the simple name "Jesus" in 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:14; Gal. 6:17; 1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 4:5,10,11,14; 11:4; Rom. 3:26; 8:11; Phil. 2:10). This has led a few to contend that Paul is refuting the Gnostics who made sharp division between the earthly Jesus and the heavenly Christ (but gnosticism was at best incipient at this early stage). Others argue that Paul does in fact draw attention to the earthly Jesus rather than the risen Christ "but that the point being made is that the truth of the tradition, and particularly its ethical aspects, is not just determined by the idea of Christ but has its roots in the life and death of the historical Jesus or contains teaching from the historical Jesus" (Lincoln, 282). Lincoln himself insists that the shift from "Christ" or "Christ Jesus" to "Jesus" is merely stylistic. Regardless of the reason for the use of this name, Paul's point is that truth can only be found in Jesus, in the knowledge and experience of, and in relationship to, him.

Paul now explains in detail precisely what they (and we) have been taught. There are three phrases in vv. 22-24 (each an infinitive in Greek: to lay aside or to put off, to be renewed, and to put on), the nature of which has been much debated. Are they simple imperatives (commands; cf. Rom. 12:15; Phil. 3:16 where infinitives function as imperatives)? Do they indicate purpose: the readers were taught in order that they might put off the old and put on the new? Do they indicate result: the readers were taught with the result that they have, in fact, put off the old and put on the new? Or do these phrases explain or further define the content of the teaching mentioned in v. 21 (an epexegetic function)? The latter is most likely, but with an implied imperatival force. In other words, what they have been taught in Christ is that they are to put off the old man and put on the new.

First, they have been taught to "lay aside the old self" or to "put off the old man" (v. 22). Who or what is the "old man" (v. 22) and the "new man" (v. 24)?

The old man "designates the whole personality of a person when he is ruled by sin" (O'Brien, 328). Or again, "the old person is the person living under the dominion of the present evil age and its powers, and this previous identity has to be dealt with decisively" (Lincoln, 285). Whereas in Col. 3:9 and Rom. 6:6 the break with the old is portrayed as having already occurred in the past, most likely at the moment of conversion, here Paul calls on his readers "to continue to live out its significance by giving up on that old person that they no longer are." They are new people who must become in practice what God has already made them, and that involves the resolve to put off the old way of life as it attempts to impinge (285-86). Here again we see the tension between the "already" and the "not yet" in Paul's theology. We have "already" put off the old man but we have "not yet" grown into a life of consistency with that new identity.

It is senseless to continue in their former ways because that "old man" has no future: it is even now "being corrupted" (v. 22), or as O'Brien has put it, is "earmarked for demolition" (328). As opposed to the new person, who is in a process of renewal [cf.

v. 23], the old person is in a process of moral corruption, rottenness and decay which will end in the final destruction of death. This is due to the operation of the "lusts of deceit" (v. 22b). In other words, the cause of this progressive decay are the wicked desires that flow from deceit. Says Lincoln, "a false perspective on reality generates a confusion of desires which can never be satisfied because they have lost touch with what is true. Such desires serve the power of deceit, and so are themselves ultimately illusory and contribute to the ruin of the old person" (286).

Second, they have been taught to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (v. 23; cf. Rom. 12:2). What is the meaning of "spirit" here?

- * spirit = the human spirit as the sphere in which the renewal takes place (although nowhere else in Ephesians does pneuma refer to the human spirit).

- * spirit = mind, hence, 'the spirit which is your mind.

- * spirit = the Holy Spirit who renews the mind by dwelling within it (for this idea, see Titus 3:5; see also Eph. 1:17; 3:16; 4:3; 5:18; 6:18). Fee wonders 'whether this phrase is not a kind of shorthand for, 'be renewed in your minds by the Spirit' (710). However, the Greek text speaks about the spirit of your mind, not the spirit in your mind. The Spirit is often said to be 'of Christ or 'of God but 'nowhere else is the divine Spirit depicted as belonging to a human being or to part of a human being (Lincoln, 287). Fee eventually rejects this view as well.

- * spirit = the disposition or temper or inclination of one's mind.

- * spirit = the governing principle by which the mind is regulated; what Hodge calls "the interior life of the mind" (264).

- * spirit = a person's innermost being, as in 3:16.

This inward, spiritual renewal of the inner being is both progressive (the infinite is present tense, as over against the aorist [past] tense of the first and third infinitives) and a work of God (passive voice).

Third, they have been taught to "put on the new man" (v. 24). Paul earlier used this terminology in a corporate sense of the "one new man which" = the church, believing Jews and Gentiles now co-equal in one body. But here he uses it in an individual sense to refer to the person who is under the dominion of the new creation and its life.

"On the basis of what God has accomplished in Christ, this new identity must be appropriated 'put on' in such a way that its ethical dimensions become apparent" (Lincoln, 287). Note three additional things:

(1) God is not only the author of this work of (re)creation, he is also its pattern or model. We are being renewed, lit., "according to God" (v. 24), i.e., to be like Him.

(2) To be like God is to live in "righteousness and holiness" (features of God's character in Ps. 144:17; Deut. 32:4).

(3) This righteousness and holiness do not emerge or exist in a vacuum: they are, literally, "of the truth," i.e., they are the fruit and product of the truth which we have already heard and are in the process of learning. In other words, righteousness and holiness cannot exist apart from an on-going indoctrination in the substantive truths and theological principles of the Word of God.

b. its features 4:25-32

Paul turns his attention away from Gentile behavior to a listing of both negative and positive features of a life of holiness. We will examine these under 7 general headings.

(1) Speaking the truth 4:25

Lit., "having put off the lie" (v. 25a). But not lying is of little help if there is not in its place an active pursuit of the truth. Paul draws from Zech. 8:16 to make his point. The reason for this exhortation is not simply because lying is sinful and thus an offense against God, but because "we are members of one another" (v. 25b). We must remember that "fellowship is built on trust, and trust is built on truth" (Stott, 185). Cf. Eph. 4:15

(2) Righteous anger 4:26-27

Again, Paul draws on the OT for his point (see Ps. 4:4). There are generally two views of this exhortation.

* One view is that Paul's exhortation is conditional or concessive: "If (or, when) you get angry, don't sin." This is Lincoln's view, who provides this paraphrase: "Anger is to be avoided at all costs, but if, for whatever

reason, you do get angry, then refuse to indulge such anger so that you do not sin" (301). This view, however, is grammatically unlikely (see Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 491).

* Another view is that the command and prohibition which follows are both to be taken at face value. There are occasions in the life of the church when righteous indignation is called for. But be careful. Don't let your anger simmer and seethe and lead you into other sin such as pride, spite, malice, or a longing for revenge. The word translated 'anger in v. 27 may refer to the cause of your anger (Wallace contends, without warrant, in my opinion, that Paul is referring to an incident that required church discipline).

The exhortation not to let "the sun go down on your anger" (v. 26b) is not to be taken literally. If it were, "it would mean that those who lived in the Arctic or Antarctic would at certain times of the year have no temporal limitation on their anger!" (Best, 450). In the OT sunset was viewed as the time limit for a number of activities (see Deut. 24:13,15,23). Paul's point is simply that we must be brief in our anger; we must not let it settle and harden before dealing with its cause. Thus this is "a warning against brooding in anger or nursing it. It is to be dealt with promptly, with reconciliation being effected as quickly as possible" (O'Brien, 340).

Here we see that the devil can exploit the relational strains and tension that develop in the Christian community. Sydney Page is correct to point out "that the devil is not credited with producing anger; that is, its source is apparently to be found within the person himself or herself. Nevertheless, anger can provide the devil with an opportunity to wreak havoc in the life of the individual and the community" (188-89). It seems

reasonable that Satan's activity in this regard would extend to the other sins mentioned in the immediately subsequent context: stealing, unwholesome speech, bitterness, wrath, clamor, slander, malice, unforgiveness (see vv. 28-32).

Clinton Arnold points to Paul's use of the term *topos*, translated "foothold" or "opportunity". He argues that this word is often used in the NT for "inhabited space" (cf. Lk. 2:7; 4:37; 14:9; John 14:2-3). Even more to the point, says Arnold, are passages that illustrate the use of *topos* to refer to the inhabiting space of an evil spirit, such as Lk. 11:24 and Rev. 12:7-8. Thus he concludes that "the most natural way to interpret the use of *topos* in Ephesians 4:27 is the idea of inhabitable space. Paul is thus calling these believers to vigilance and moral purity so that they do not relinquish a base of operations to demonic spirits" (88).

(3) Generosity, not greed 4:28

Prohibitions against theft are common in the Bible (see Exod. 20:15; Deut. 5:19; Lev. 19:11; Mark 10:19; Rom. 13:9; etc.). Here Paul says that stealing is to be replaced by hard work. The needy person is most likely someone within the church. Thus "the motive for work is not individual profit but rather communal well-being. . . . The thief is to become a philanthropist" (Lincoln, 304). Thus, Paul is saying that thieves fail the community of faith, not because they steal from other Christians, but because they make no financial contribution to it.

(4) Controlling your speech 4:29

The word translated "unwholesome" (*sapros*; NASB) is found only here and in Mt. 7:17-18; 12:33; 13:48; Luke 6:43. In these latter texts it = rotten fruit, decaying food, putrid fish. Paul is speaking about spiritual halitosis! What kind of speech does he have in mind?

Lying (cf. v. 25), obscenity, abusive language, gossip, flattery that manipulates, cynical remarks, judgmentalism, slander, contemptuous talk, condescending speech (with a patronizing attitude), sarcasm that cuts and degrades, mockery, ridicule, etc.

Why must we guard our speech? Because (1) words are the test or revelation of our character (cf. Isa. 6:5-7), and (2) words are the basis of judgment (cf. Mt. 12:36-37).

What kind of speech should we seek to cultivate?

Encouragement, truth, words that build confidence in others, words that remind others of their identity in Christ, praise, reassurance (esp. following failure), comfort, sympathy, instruction, rebuke for sin, loving criticism, warning of impending danger, etc.

Literally, Paul says we are to speak so as to "give grace to those who hear." Many contend that this simply means "to do a favor" or "to confer a benefit." But could Paul mean that our words are vehicles or channels for God's grace to others? Does speech have the power to communicate God's grace to those in need? Before speaking, ask yourself four questions:

First, what is my motive for speaking? What is my reason for responding to this person? What do I hope to accomplish by opening my mouth?

Second, what impact will my words have on this person? Will it tend to tear them down or build them up?

Third, what impact would my words have on me if the situation were reversed?

Fourth, what would Jesus say?

(5) Pleasing the Spirit 4:30

Paul's language is taken from Isa. 63:10 and together with other texts (1 Thess. 4:8; 5:18) indicates that the Holy Spirit is a person, not an impassible, unfeeling, energy. The one who is said to be "grieved" (= to cause pain or hurt, to provoke or irritate) is the Spirit who is characterized by holiness and who is himself a co-equal member of the Trinity. "It is not a question of some offense aimed directly at the Spirit but rather that believers by committing the sort of sins that have been mentioned in the earlier sentences, sins which disrupt communal life, are thereby disrupting and opposing the

work of the Spirit in building up the Church (cf. 2:22; 4:3,4). When believers act in a way that harms their brothers and sisters, God is hurt" (Lincoln, 307). Says Fee:

Since spirit does not tend to call forth personal images, and since our view of God is often laced with a kind of transcendence that keeps him especially distant from our everyday lives, it is easy for us to pass off our sins in a much too casual way. Here, then, is the text that forever reminds us that such sins bring grief to God (715).

This Spirit whom we grieve by our sin is also the one by whom we were sealed (Eph. 1:13) for the day of redemption, i.e., that future day when the redemption that is already ours in terms of the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7) will extend to the glorification of our bodies, finally and fully setting us free from corruption in both body and spirit.

(6) Unrighteous anger 4:31

Paul returns here to the subject of anger (cf. v. 26). He focuses on five different aspects of sinful anger, together with the "malice" that so often characterizes them all.

* "Bitterness" refers to that hard-heartedness towards others that will not let go of the past (cf. Rom. 3:14; Acts 8:23; Heb. 12:15).

* "Wrath" and "Anger" should be taken together. Some prefer to see them as synonymous, but it may be that the former points to those explosive outbursts of rage whereas the latter refers to the more settled, seething orientation of hostility toward another.

* "Clamor" also translated "shouting" is a word that elsewhere in the NT has a neutral force and means simply to cry aloud or shout for help or in victory. Here "it suggests the lack of restraint which erupts in angry yelling" (Lincoln, 308-09).

* "Slander" is literally, "blasphemy" (blasphemia), but obviously refers to the verbal abuse and vilifying of other people, not God (see Col. 3:8; Mark 7:22; 1 Tim. 6:4).

* "Malice" is probably to be applied to all the previous terms, and points to the

attitude toward others that desires their harm or distress.

Most commentators recognize some sort of progression in the relationship of these terms. Lincoln's view is typical: There is a progression "from anger's inner center (pikria) through its initial eruption (thumos) and steady festering (orge) to its external expression (krauge) and damaging of others (blasphemia)" (309).

(7) Forgiveness 4:32

There is considerable confusion among Christians as to the nature of forgiveness. I want to list five myths about forgiveness, followed by five truths.

First, myths about forgiveness:

* Forgiveness is not forgetting. Why? Because: (a) God does not forget, notwithstanding what you

think Jer. 31:34 is saying. This is a metaphor, a word picture, designed to emphasize God's gracious determination not to hold us liable for our sins. (b) It is intellectually and mentally impossible to forget. Try to forget and you can be assured you will remember! (c) It is experientially devastating. Once having

successfully "forgotten an offense," any occasion that provokes the memory of it can lead to guilt and shame and depression for having failed so miserably to forget. One becomes unwilling ever to forgive, knowing that they will in all likelihood remember.

* Forgiveness does not entail the absence of feeling pain. (a) The only way to stop hurting is to stop feeling and the only way to stop feeling is to die emotionally. (b) This myth is one of the primary reasons people refuse to forgive. They know they can't stop feeling the sting of the sin and they don't want to be hypocrites.

* Forgiveness does not mean you cease longing for justice. Vengeance is not a bad thing. If it were, God would be guilty of a sin (see Rom. 12:19). It's simply that He's better at it than we are.

Leave it to Him. Forgiveness does not mean you ignore that a wrong was done or deny that sin was committed. It simply means you decide to let God be the avenger. One reason people refuse to forgive is that they believe to do so would be to minimize the offense "and that's not fair!"

* Forgiveness does not mean you make it easy for the offender to hurt you again. He or she may hurt you again. That is their choice. But you must set boundaries on your relationship with them. True love never aids and abets the sin of another. True forgiveness is not incompatible with holding a person accountable for their actions and calling them to repent. Forgiveness does not mean you become a doormat for someone else's sin.

* Forgiveness is rarely a one-time, climactic event. It is often a life-long process. It may well begin with an act, but it often requires reaffirmation.

Second, truths about forgiveness. Paul says we are to forgive "as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). The "as" points to two things: we are to forgive "because God forgave us" and "as or in the same way He forgave us." So how did God forgive us?

* He forgave us by absorbing in himself the destructive and painful consequences of our sin against him. Forgiveness is therefore the decision to live with the painful consequences of another person's sin. You are going to have to do so anyway, so you might as well do it without the bitterness and rancor and hatred.

* God forgave us in Christ by canceling the debt we owed him. We are no longer held liable for our sins or in any way made to pay for them. To forgive someone thus means you promise not to bring it up to the offender, to others, or to yourself, as a way of using it against them.

* Forgiving others as God has forgiven us means you resolve to revoke revenge. It means you refuse to let the anger and pain energize an agenda to exact payment, be it emotional, relational, physical, or financial. You cancel the debt by

* Forgiving others as God has forgiven us means a determination to do them good rather than evil. See Rom. 12:20-21.

* God forgave us in Christ by reconciling us to himself, by restoring the relationship our sin had severed. True forgiveness pursues restoration. True forgiveness longs to love again. However, relationship is built on trust, and trust is not built in a day. Also, restoration and reconciliation are not always possible. Said Paul: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18).