

Ephesians 14-07-20b

In Ephesians chapter 4 verse 28, it says, Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. I told you it's an interesting thing to have a Bible with typos. My Bible has two twos.

It says that he may have something to to give. How much did I give for this anyway? Better to have too many words than too few, or too too few. Let him who stole steal no longer.

This is again an instance of the present tense, because we're trying to figure out what this means. We don't want to be stealing, right? We don't want to be stealing. We don't want to be stealing.

So we need to know what this is, if it's anything other than just theft of physical goods. And if you look at the context here, these are in the church, one another commands. Having put away the deception, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, with his fellow believer, with his fellow participant in the ecclesia, the fellowship of the church here.

These are one another's. Maintain your anger toward evil and things that deserve to be the target of anger, but don't be sinful as you do it. And don't let the sun go down on anything that might rise up and accompany it, such as bitterness or an irritability.

And this doesn't technically mean it's okay until the sun goes down. It means any such irritation or irascibility should be of a very short duration. It's okay if you have an emotional response when a fresh instance of something comes up, but it should very quickly die back down to being a constant, divine type of displeasure and anger with a thing, not a proactive bitterness.

And do not give opportunity to the devil, because the devil will use that. It opens a chink in our armor if we swell too big in our anger. You get too big for your britches, you get too big for your armor, and it opens up gaps, and this gives a place for the devil to attack.

And it should never reach that point. Now, in verse 28, it says in English, "...let him who stole steal no longer." This is a repetition of the verb klepto, which has obvious repercussions on down into English. You know what a kleptomaniac is.

Klepto. This is a present active participle. Present active.

Participle is an I-N-G word. And it also kind of turns it into a noun. So it is the stealing one.

The stealing one. This is ha-klepton. Actually, ha-klepton.

Because it's an omega. The one who is stealing on an ongoing basis. We said you should be angry at evil on an ongoing basis.

Here's someone who is routinely stealing. Routinely depriving somebody of things that don't

belong to them. So, ha-klepton meketi klepteto.

Me is the negative there. And this is no longer. Let the one who is a stealer no longer be stealing.

And this is a present active imperative. Let the one who is a stealer no longer be a stealer. Ongoing action in both cases.

So what does this mean? It's a little petty theft. Some cash going missing. Taking stuff and hawking it.

What does it mean? Well, in this context, there is help by way of contrast. It says, but rather let him labor. Kopiao, K-O-P-I-A-O is a word that literally means to beat, to pound.

And it came to mean you are tired because you have been pounding away at something. You've been beating on something. You're a railroad worker pounding spikes.

You're in a prison yard turning big ones into little ones with a hammer. You're hammering nails. You're beating a rug with a rug whip or whatever it is you're doing.

But this repetitious action wears you out. And so Kopiao came to be associated with the fatigue that comes from repetitious action. Doing something repeatedly.

And it comes to mean intense labor of any kind. Intense, wearying labor. Labor that makes you tired.

Labor that wears you out. Kopiao. Instead of being a stealer, let him not be a stealer, but rather let him be, and this is another present active imperative, let him be on an ongoing basis someone who wears himself out working.

It doesn't mean find a nice light job that you can do with one hand and listen to tunes. It doesn't mean work in your pajamas at home and make \$1,600 a day as they constantly want you to fantasize can be done. Do telemarketing.

Work at home in your clothes and you can make a fortune. This is a lie. You can't.

But this is labor. This is tiring work. And it is an imperative.

I've told you in the very recent past that in my opinion there are more than ten commandments in the Decalogue. The most recent additional command, the one related to the Sabbath. What's the extra imperative in that clause? Six days thou shalt work.

And it is carried over in the New Testament. Believers are to work. Not sporadically, not occasionally, not only in a case of desperation.

This is regular consistent wearying work. Believers are supposed to work. We are commanded to

work.

It's not an option. Not a nice to do. Not as the occasion arises or if you feel like it.

Believers are commanded to work, to labor. And of course this is the masculine here because this is aimed primarily at the men who are the breadwinner slash provider slash responsible parties in a family. The ladies at a younger age are under the shelter and protection of their father and his provision.

He hands off that responsibility to the husband when he asks for her hand. Her hand is released from the father and given to the husband. That's now his responsibility to protect and to provide, to possess and to have personal relationship with.

It transfers from the father who is a male to the husband who is a male for the wife who is a female. It is the divine order. And that's why the man is the one who does kopi a'o.

He does regular in many cases repetitive and wearying work. The man who is a Christian is to work. There's no ifs, ands or buts.

There's no exceptions. Let him who stole, which we'll come back to, let him who is a stealer no longer be a stealer but rather let him be working. Ergazomenai is next.

This is the present middle participle. Let him labor. This is a present active imperative command.

Let him labor. What kind of labor? Working. Ergazomenas.

It's a participle. It's a nounized thing. He is a working man.

Working with his hands. Manual labor. Working with his hands.

Pretty tough to do even computer work without your hands. He's not an advisor. He is working with his hands.

Agathos. That which is good. Agathos.

All things work together for Agathos to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. Hwai. Hina.

So that. Now this is real interesting and this colors the entire imperative. What kind of work is this? What is its purpose? That he may have something to give to him who has need.

Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Does that make sense to you? If everybody is working with his hands then why is there anybody that has need? If everybody is making a wage why is there anybody who is needy? And this isn't a her who has need.

This is not like a widow or an orphan. This is a masculine who. A masculine him who has need.

So some guy has a need. Didn't he just say you ought to be working with your hands? But he says here the one who is who's the target of this command? Who's the one that is told that he should be a worker? Working with his hands. The one who formerly was stealing.

The one who is a stealer let him stop being a stealer. Let him be a worker and let him give to one who has need. Someone who has genuine need is not a stealer in other words.

If you start identifying within the group here's somebody who has a genuine need. The guy broke his hand. He can't work for some set period of time.

Here's somebody who is in a tight spot, lost his job and hasn't been able to secure another one. Here's somebody who for whatever reason has need. For whatever reason has need.

Legitimate need. Legitimate need. So guess what? The stealer is someone who acts like they have a need and they don't.

They are taking the contributions, they are living on the support that belongs to those who have an actual need. There are legitimate cases of need and it is a wonderful thing for believers in the Church of God to help meet that need. There are others who fake the need and by living that deception, think about verse 25, by presenting the lie, the deception, look I just can't make it, can you help me out? All of us at one time or another have either seen or heard about panhandlers who are out there with a cardboard sign.

The guy takes off his prosthetic leg and sits there looking like an object of pity and collects money from passing drivers and then goes around behind the quick trip and there's his late model Lexus puts his prosthetic leg back on and goes to his house that I can't afford and he makes more money panhandling than he would if he worked with his hands. He presents a false need. Now this can happen in all different kinds of ways.

People can be subjective, people can adopt a victim mentality, well I can't help it this, I can't help it that, I can't help it the other. When you derive support from others under false pretenses as a part of deception, you're a stealer. This is the stealing that is going on.

Accepting support when you don't need it. It's just easier. You are the lazy man.

You are the man who prefers to receive support instead of working until you're weary. Working until you can work no more. Koptato er godso, er gazaminoi, er gazaminos.

So, there is an exhortation throughout the Old Testament and an exhortation throughout the New Testament that the man of God is to be a worker that does not need to be ashamed. A workman, a man of work, not a man relying on the hospitality of strangers like Blanche. If you know your literature, you know who I'm talking about.

A worker. What does it mean? That him who is currently soaking up support under false pretenses no longer soak up support from his fellow believers under false pretenses. But rather, the command is let him work with his hands so that he can be someone who, instead of receiving support under false pretenses, can provide support to those who have genuine need.

Now that is much more prevalent in the church than actual, hey who took my stuff, thievery. This is playing on the sympathies of people. By the way, you can be a thief of time.

I just want you to listen to me while I cry on your shoulder. You're stealing that person's time. Well, I just want you to listen to me while I, you know, feel sorry for myself.

I present myself as worse off than I actually am, hoping that in your generosity you will offer me something. If it is in any way possible for you to work and you don't, and I mean work to the point of exhaustion, then it's not a legitimate need. That's the word of God.

No ifs ands or buts. The one who is a leech, the one who is a sponge, the one who is accepting the help of others when he could be helping himself through work is the target of this admonition, this imperative. Let him who is soaking his fellow believers do so no longer.

Rather he should work, work. Kopi a'o ergadzo. Notice, it doesn't say that he may have something to meet his own needs.

What's the purpose of his work? Does it say that? Let him work with his hands and meet his own needs? This is not a truly needy person. This is a person who needs to work so that he will have more than his own needs. He'll have enough to be able to help others who do have a genuine need.

If you are able to work but you don't, you're not needy. And if you work, you can not only sustain yourself but you can begin to be a giver instead of a receiver. You can begin to be a contributor instead of a liability.

Creating a deficit. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth. Many times this is how needs are presented.

You can see the transition. You can see the flow of thought. All of this is under the heading of leave aside the deception.

Put it away. It's all part of the deception. The victim mentality is a part of the deception.

Oh, I can't do it is a part of the deception. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. Any needs that we have are going to be of a temporary and relatively short duration.

None of us should become a permanent and ongoing burden on our fellow believers as men. We may be temporarily embarrassed. We may end up being between jobs.

We may get in a fix or a tight spot. And it's a wonderful thing. It gives an opportunity for other believers to assist and to be generous and to be givers in a time of genuine need.

But this having of a need is not an ongoing endless proposition. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth. And the Greek word order here is interesting because it is every word that is corrupt out of your mouth let it not come.

And the idea here is you've got to think about the words before your mouth is moving. Look at the words. Are they corrupt? Stop them before they come out of your mouth.

You don't say them and say whoops that was corrupt. I shouldn't have said that. Every word that is corrupt out of your mouth let it not come.

Doesn't mean that it doesn't occur to you to say but there is a gate. There is an evaluation. And before it comes out of your mouth whoops corrupt word.

This is sort of the reverse of the New Jerusalem. Remember the gates of the New Jerusalem? Everything, nothing that defiles or that partakes of deception is allowed in to the New Jerusalem. Well if you've got a New Jerusalem heart then no corrupt word is going to proceed out of your mouth.

The word here is *lagas*. And this goes beyond the mere *palabras* as they say in Spanish. Not just the words in terms of vocabulary but this is concepts.

This is thoughts. *Lagas* is often used for the truth. In the beginning was the word.

The word was with God. The word was God. That's *lagas*.

No corruption of the truth. What should proceed out of our mouths? That which is good *agathos* for needed edification. And the word here for needed is the very same word that was up above.

If you work with your hands to the point of exhaustion so that you have something to contribute to the one who has need. Sometimes what is needed is the truth. Maybe a harsh truth.

Maybe a displeasing truth. Maybe a truth that isn't taken well. But sometimes what is needed is edification.

And the words that proceed out of our mouths ought to be those not that are corrupt. You know what corruption is? Telling people things are okay when they're not. You know what's corrupt? It's saying something is righteous when it's evil.

Something is welcome when it is an abomination. As we have talked about this morning. That is a corrupt word.

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth. Corrupt word, out of your mouth let it not come.

Instead that which is needed for upbuilding.

Upbuilding, edification. Make the house so that it may give grace. This is just the simple word for give.

So that it will give grace to the hearers plural. And notice that there are multiple hearers. And many times these sort of harsher truths that are necessary for upbuilding are best given in a group setting.

Expressing an opinion when it isn't directed at any single individual. This isn't a mentoring, discipleship, let me tell you what you're doing wrong. Sort of one on one conversation here.

The way Paul expresses this is corrupt words don't proceed out of our mouths, but those that will give grace to the hearers. It benefits a number of people who hear these words. It is upbuilding.

And upbuilding of course is assembling of parts. It's going to unite them. It's going to draw them together in a common view, a common cause, a common pursuit of the truth of Christ.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, verse 30. Grieve here is *lupeo*. Do you know the scientific name for the wolf? What's the Latin name for a wolf? *Lupus*.

L-U-P-U-S. This is the Greek verb *lupeo*. And the idea, the reason wolves are given this *lupus* name, there's also a disease by that name, but the reason they're given it is because of their mournful howl.

They're thought to be morose and melancholy. They're like a melancholy dog that's out there howling at the moon and they sound so plaintive and feeling sorry for the wolf, allegedly. Don't feel that sorry for him.

But *lupeo*. Do not cause sorrow to the Holy Spirit of God. Is God capable of emotion? For the purposes of our understanding, yes.

God can be angry. God can be pleased. God can be sorry or sorrowful.

And here, the third person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit specifically. Why not God the Father? Do not grieve God. Do not grieve the Lord Jesus.

Wouldn't that be a valid thing to say at this point? Why does Paul single out the Holy Spirit? What do you think? In this context, laying aside the deception, speaking truth to one another, what is the present glue that is unifying and drawing together and imparting and clarifying truth for all believers in this group? What is the immediate agent of understanding truth, remembering truth, speaking truth? Who's the immediate agent for that? Who supplies the power and the discernment, knowing when to speak and what to speak? It will be given to you in that hour, Jesus told the disciples what you should say when you're on the spot. It's the Holy Spirit. So if this

is the mission and the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, one of many, don't make Him sorry that He's there by failing to let Him do His job.

Wouldn't this make sense in the context? There are truths that need to be spoken for up-building. Don't soft-pedal it. Don't corrupt it.

Don't change it. Don't back away from it and say, well, many believe, but I don't really hold with that. I think a lot of the Bible is true, but not that particular part.

That's corrupt. Corrupt word shouldn't come out of your mouth. What should come out of your mouth is truth that meets the need.

And there's a need for truth. There's a need for plain speaking. This is the will of God.

This is the Word of God. This is the truth of God. And you need to understand that, harsh and unpleasant as it may be, because if I fail to speak it, God's Holy Spirit is going to be sorry that He is hanging around trying to get me to do what I'm supposed to do.

And in the end, you're going to miss out on an important, necessary, up-building truth. There is a time for us to speak. And if we are sensitive to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, we will speak when it is time to speak.

And it will not be adulterated. It won't be modified. It won't be watered down.

What does this say? We've seen it this morning. These are truths that should be spoken, should be held up, should be honored, and should be followed in our assembly. And we should encourage one another unto love and good works with these things in mind.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you, plural, you all were sealed with a view toward, eis, unto, e-i-s, unto, with a view toward. Why did God the Holy Spirit seal all of us? Looking toward the day of redemption. We are sealed.

We are empowered. We are prepared. We are being built up because there is a day of redemption coming.

What does that mean, day of redemption? What do you think? What does it mean to redeem something? If I give you a coupon and it says, redeem this coupon by July the 31st of 2014, what do you need to do? What does it mean to redeem? I would go down and collect what that thing represents, right? The day of redemption is the day of collection. We used to, long ago, I don't know if they still do it, but there used to be S&H green stamps. Get those stamps every time you buy groceries.

They used to just come flooding out. You have a family of six people in it, go to get groceries, little green stamp machine, green stamps just coming out by the double and quad columns. And

you'd take these strips and blocks of green stamps and paste them in.

And when you had so many pages and filled so many books, you could trade them in. You could get a bicycle, you could get a ball glove. I'm sure there were home appliances and stuff, but when I was a little kid, I thought of green stamp books in terms of what can I redeem these for? You turn it in and you get a baseball mitt or you get something that you're after.

You collect them, you hold them, and then you redeem them. So, do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you all were sealed. This is Eris.

This is a reality summed up. Ace, with a view toward the day of redemption. What's going on on the day of redemption? Who's redeeming what? Well, that's pretty easy.

Who's the Redeemer? Capital R. Who's the Redeemer? I will sing of my Redeemer. Sing, O sing of my Redeemer. It's the Lord Jesus.

What is He going to redeem? Us. God the Holy Spirit is sealing us, is uniting us, is building us up, is eliminating from us deception and corruption with a view toward the Lord Jesus who can present to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. Tolerating stealing, tolerating corrupt talk, tolerating the lie and the deception in the church prevents the Holy Spirit from doing His job of sealing a holy group for the Lord Jesus to come and collect.

It's not just you, it's the group. When we fail and when we sin, when we fall short, when we steal instead of working with our hands, when we communicate corrupt words, when we adulterate the truth, when we soft peddle what God says, it's not just us. The corruption spreads.

That is a cancer that must be cut out. People who embrace the deception, people who refuse to work with their hands and look for ways to be supplying the need of others through their work and through their truth speaking are to be separated from, are to be eschewed, are to be set aside and away along with the deception that they perpetrate, that they embrace, that they represent, that they themselves follow. A glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, holy and without blemish.

This is what God the Holy Spirit seals us to be. And when we thwart and slow down that effort and that ministry of the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit is grieved, is made sorry. Well, this means that bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking should be put away from us along with all malice.

Instead, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God in Christ forgave us. That's where we will pick up next time. But doesn't this passage give us something to think about in terms of what we tolerate, what we say and how we say it.

What we support, what we oppose. Do we make a difference? Does our light shine? Do we

reflect light in the darkness? Or are we comports and blending with the darkness because we don't speak up? We don't support what is good and askew what is evil. It is time to stand up and be counted.

This passage tells us God the Holy Spirit is aware and knows. He is with us. He strengthens, enables, guides when we dedicate ourselves to the truth and He is sorry when we don't.

We can be a blessing to one another. We can be one who meets needs or we can be the needy. One who needs to be spoken to.

One who needs to be supported. One who is a drain and a drag and a negative influence on fellow believers. We are one or the other.

You notice there is no middle ground here. There are those who work and meet needs and speak the truth. There are those who embrace the deception and are needy and need to be spoken to.

There is no third category. We are one or the other. So it is a sobering challenge.

It is a serious exhortation and one that we need to take to heart because the day of redemption is approaching and it is also the day of judgment and it is the day of evaluation and how will we stand? This momentary light affliction and this life will pale to insignificance compared to the eternal weight of glory that is possible for us in the age that is to come. Well, we will finish up the last part of this chapter and Lord willing we will get into chapter 5 next time and find out what it means to be an imitator of God next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you that we first and foremost are those who receive your word under the ministry of your spirit and we have the opportunity as a transaction between you and us to learn, to heed, to change our minds, to set our course and it is then having been exposed to the truth of your word that we interact with one another, we speak, we live, we have fellowship with one another. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ who has given us that tremendous privilege.

We know with that privilege comes responsibility and we pray that God the Holy Spirit will help us individually and collectively to see where our responsibility lies and to claim the provision you have made for us that enables us to fulfill it, to live and to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus and to be fully prepared and fully qualified so that we can be joyful at his coming. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.