



DO NOT SIN

Ephesians 4:25-27

EPHESIANS 4:2

“Bear one another
in love.”

Markus Barth, [Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 4-6](#), vol. 34A, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 459.

EPHESIANS 4:11-13

¹¹ Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

Tyndale House Publishers, [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), Eph 4:11–16.

EPHESIANS 4:14-16

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. ¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Tyndale House Publishers, [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), Eph 4:11–16.

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

The Greek verb used at this point (*alētheuō*) may mean “to cherish,” “to maintain,” “to say,” “to do,” “to live the truth.”

In the context of Eph 4:15 the testimony given by speech plays an outstanding role as the references to the confession, the ministers of the Word, true and false teaching, and lying show.

In Gal 4:16 Paul uses the verb *alētheuō* in the narrow sense of “saying the truth” or “preaching the gospel.” There is no evidence that he knew the meanings “to cherish” or “to do the truth.”

Therefore, it is advisable to understand Eph 4:15a as an allusion to verbal testimony.

LOVE

The passage calls for the right confession, and it urges the whole church and all its members to be a confessing church.

Most interpreters agree that the term “in love” is not a redundant duplication of the reference to “love” in vs. 16: there it qualifies the growth, here “speaking the truth.”

Orthodox teaching can and must not be promoted at the expense of love.

Paul speaks of a confessional stance that is founded on God’s love, mutual love, and an edifying missionary zeal (cf. 4:29).

The truth entrusted to the congregation is the truth of all-conquering love.

Where there is no love, the truth revealed by God is denied. Equally, without “truth” there may well be a “conspiracy” that aims to subjugate men to human “opinions” (Calvin), but no solid unity and community.

EPHESIANS 4:25-27

²⁵ So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. ²⁶ And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

Tyndale House Publishers, [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), Eph 4:25–27.

LOVE

- The man to be loved is one of the saints: bear “one another.” In OT terminology he is the “brother” or “neighbor” included in the election and covenant of God, but also the resident alien whatever his race, status, culture (Lev 19:18, 33–34).
- According to Ephesians he is a child of God, a fellow citizen in God’s city, a fellow worshiper in God’s temple.
- Only in the earliest Pauline Epistle is this restriction broken through: in 1 Thess 3:12 the apostle expresses the confidence that the Lord will abundantly provide the saints with “love of one another and of all men,” and in 1 Thess 5:14–15 he admonishes them to demonstrate “forbearance toward all men.”
- According to all other Pauline texts dealing with “love,” only the saints are to be “loved.”

1. LOVE

- Persons who are not “brothers” or “neighbors” have the right to receive a different testimony: they are to be honored, obeyed, respected, etc.
- When Christians have to deal with them they are expected to do everything that is right and decent and to avoid whatever is unseemly.
- Evil is never to be repaid by evil.¹⁷⁸ Love, however, is reserved for the brethren: “Love one another with brotherly affection” (Rom 12:10).
- Still, twice in the NT personal enemies and the persecutors of the church are included among the neighbors to be loved (Rom 12:14–21; Matt 5:43–48).

2. LOVE

- The fellow saint who has the right to be loved is one with whom a Christian is in “contact.” A distant and unknown person may be honored, supported, feared, but in none of his epistles except his first does Paul ever demand that he be loved. Love would be totally impersonal and maybe cheap if shown to people never met, or to those only dimly known, for whose specific burdens responsibility cannot be assumed.
- Love presupposes unity and diversity, i.e. awareness of differentiations between man and man, saint and saint—even in the community of “one faith,” in “one body,” under “one God and Father” (Eph 4:4–6). The fellow saint who is to be loved is not just an *alter ego*; he may, but he need not necessarily, be a soul brother, a virtual twin, or a dear friend. Rather he has his own origin, history, character, behavior. Life with him and confrontation with him may be encumbered by marks of his sin against God, and may be enriched by the grace given to him by God.

3. LOVE BEARS

- The fellow man to be loved is potentially or actually a burden—or else Paul would not speak of “bearing” him “in love.” According to 4:2 the brother is himself a burden; Gal 6:2 may indicate that he “labors and is heavy laden”: “Bear one another’s burden.” In either case Paul expects that fellow Christians will take up the load of others. It is unlikely that the words “in love” intend to say that love of the neighbor might or should incidentally lead to and include such “bearing.” Rather mutual love consists of this acceptance of one’s neighbor, including the load on his shoulder.

4. LOVE NEEDS AND DEPENDS

- “Love” needs the neighbor and is dependent upon him. The neighbor—even the one who is a burden and whose character and behavior prove cumbersome—is much more than just an occasion or test of love. He is its very material. Love is not an abstract substance or mood that can be present in a man’s heart even when there are no others in sight and no confrontations are taking place.
- It does not exist in a vacuum, *in abstracto*, in detachment from involvement in other men’s lives. Rather it is a question of being surprised by a neighbor, accepting him, going out to him, and seeking solidarity and unity just with him even if this should mean temporary neglect of, or estrangement from, others.
- Such love is an event that takes place exclusively when one meets and lives with specific men, women, children, old people, relatives, and strangers. Love is always love of this or that person, love here and now, love shown under ever new conditions in ever original forms. Where there is love, there this and that person in his uniqueness is “borne” and fully accepted.