

God's Authority

Ephesians 4.25-31

Key Points:

- At the cross and resurrection, Jesus won for us victory over sin. Paul (v.22-24) calls us to live out of this truth by throwing off our old sinful nature and putting on our new nature, '*created to be like God - truly righteous and holy*'. But not only do we fail to live like this, often we really struggle with battling our old sinful nature - we see too much battle and not enough victory.
- The early church evidently battled too. Paul instructs them to *stop telling lies* (v.25) and *don't sin by letting anger control you* (v.26). It's not just that these things aren't good - they are no longer consistent with who we are in Jesus. So if we're experiencing too much battling and not enough victory, we have to ask if we're fighting the right battle! [c.f. Whac-a-mole machine, and external power cord]
- Sin affects our relationship with God, but Paul suggests that it also has another consequence (v.27) - giving a foothold (*topos*) to the devil. When we sin, we give the devil access where normally (as God's adopted children, reconciled and made holy) he has none. Every temptation to sin is an attempt to get us to live lives independently of God, and when we go down that road often enough it can lead to what the Bible calls strongholds. That's the enemy's plan - to steal, kill and destroy (John 10.10), and in this case to rob us of our new life and inheritance in Christ.
- A key weapon we have is repentance. It's not just the act of turning away from sin and asking for and receiving God's forgiveness, but also turning towards God and living in His freedom, victory and authority. And so a part of repentance is standing in God's authority and saying to the enemy that actually he has no access, no power and that his lies are indeed lies.

Questions:

1. Encourage each other with testimony about areas where you experience Transformation Freedom and Victory in your lives. What sin patterns have you struggled with that are no longer an issue?
2. Where are the battles for you? Where is your 'old nature' still present? Where are you not experiencing True Freedom? (this could be ungodly thoughts, behaviours, relationships, or simply areas of our lives that we struggle to submit to God etc.)
3. Why is it hard to let go (or put off) your old nature? Have you been fighting the wrong battle?
4. What do you think of when you hear or see the word 'devil'? What does the bible have to say? [e.g. John 10.10, Rev 12.10, 1 Pet 5.8, John 8.44, Eph 6.12]
5. What might True Freedom & Victory look like in your life? [C.f. v.28 the thief that doesn't just stop stealing, but uses his hands to bless others.]
6. How might you encourage others who are struggling with areas of their lives?
7. What do you need to repent of? Take some time alone or in twos and threes to pray to the Father who loves you and ask for forgiveness, receive that forgiveness and stand in God's authority against the enemy for any ground that has been taken.