



Love Incorruptible
#8 - The New Life
Courage Church, Detroit, MI
June 11, 2017

Okay, so we are into the second half of Ephesians 4. One thing that I am not used to doing, is in this series we are reading just really huge chunks of scripture basically every week. Until you get to chapter 6, the sections are pretty long. Then you get a couple of shorter ones.

That being said, as I was studying today's passage, I realized that I could easily do four sermons on these 16 verses along, maybe even five... but I don't think that's the right move, at least not in *this* series, *this* summer. Maybe another time...

So even though I will focus on a couple of the key things that Paul says in these incredible passages, my goal today is for us to really grasp the big idea here. So it won't really be quite as much "verse by verse" today.

Remember, Ephesians is "The Gospel of the Church" - and last week we really focused on the work of the church... how we come in here, into Courage, in order to BE EQUIPPED to do the work of the ministry. We talked about how God specifically gifted you and me in different ways... with different skill sets, and only TOGETHER can we truly accomplish the work that he has given us to do.

But as we get into the second half of chapter 4, he puts a much larger emphasis on our relationships with one another.

And what makes this message so important is *this*: the fact is... a lot of times, human relationships feel totally unmanageable. Because in all people there is one common factor, and that factor is SIN.

Another way to put it is “people.” People are the common factor in relationships.

So relationships, at their core, are fallen people trying to live in a unified way... even though we all have our own ways of how we think that life should be...

I heard a message by Pastor Chris Hodges, and in it he said that:

If you don't have healthy relationships:

1. you are 2-3 times more likely to die an early death.
2. You are more likely to suffer emotional burnout.
3. You are 5 times more likely to suffer depression
4. You are 10 times more likely to be hospitalized for some type of mental disorder.

And some of the most important relationships you will ever have are going to be the ones in the church... because, as the bible so clearly says... it is *those people* with whom you come together with to form the body that Jesus puts his head on...

But the problem with that is, a lot of the time... the people in the church may not be your first choice of who you would socially WANT to be around... they aren't all like you... and that can be a lot to navigate... But according to everything we read in the bible... its crucial that we root ourselves in the church... in the body... in the temple that Jesus Christ himself is the cornerstone of... even though in many ways it is the one of the hardest things we will ever do.

So we need the words that Paul lays out here, when He shows us HOW we ARE to relate to one another.

So if you would open your bibles with me to today's scripture, which is Ephesians 4:17-32.

The New Life

¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and **to be renewed in the spirit of your minds**, ²⁴ and to **put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.**

²⁵ **Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.** ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, **but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.** ³⁰ And *do not grieve the Holy Spirit* of God, by whom you were *sealed* for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Let's Pray

This section begins on working on the issue of ME. The issue of YOU.

Paul tells us to put OFF the old self... put away everything that used to be us... the former life... the corruption... the greed that drives most of our lives. Put it all away.

That used to be your life...

That is not your life *anymore*.

You have learned Christ... Christ has something something NEW in you.

and then we get to verses 23-25, which, in my view, are really the epicenter of this reading. Here they are again:

and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you **speaking the truth** with his neighbor, for **we are members one of another**.

Then it goes on to talk about anger... and about stealing... and about corrupt talk...

and those three things we will touch on, because its incredibly important. They all have to do with this “new self” that we ARE TO BE putting on.

But think about this... let everyone speak the truth with his neighbor... Why? BECAUSE we are members one of another.

When you understand the way that the body that is the church is designed to work, you understand why this is so important. Like we said last week... there are things that you *can* do, THAT I CAN'T DO... or I would be no good at doing.

We are created to all play different roles in the body...

But in your body, you realize enough to know that if you chop your finger off, it is going to have an affect on the whole you. If you lose an arm, that arm affects the level in which the whole body can accomplish something. You would not get very far walking, if you broke you right leg, but just kept walking on your left thinking “as long as my left leg is fine, I am good.”

In order to understand this passage, you have to view yourself as one member of the body. Because like we learned last week... infant Christians, baby Christians, are “me” Christians... its selfish... its about what can I get... but a sign of spiritual maturity, and growth, is when you begin to view your life as a small piece of a bigger whole.

And when you have a body like that... a community, where EVERYBODY has put on the new self which we are about to dive into, you begin to grow

together. Speaking the truth to each other, and working together to make the entire body grow up together.

In Ephesians 4:15, Paul says:

“speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ”

it really is the same thing, worded a bit differently. The measurement of spiritual growth has a lot to do with the way that we interact with each other. It has a lot to do with how we relate to one another.

But the reason that so many people never leave that infancy part of being a Christian, is because it is so much easier to keep it to yourself.

It is easier to keep your problems to yourself... and it is easier to keep whatever problems that you may have *with others* to yourself.

and one of the main reasons that we believe that its easier... is because we haven't learned yet what it means to speak to truth, but to actually SPEAK IT IN LOVE. So whenever we are bold enough to speak the truth, it ends up really bad... we end up making enemies with people we are supposed to be doing life with.

Because when we get hurt, whether we would say it this way or not, something in us wants to hurt back.

You did this to me... you have this coming... and I am going to give it to you!

But there is no love in that. It may be truth... but it is toxic truth. It is truth that will destroy your relationship with the other person because if you speak the truth and it is not out of love... really all that it is, is judgment.

But love has to be the centerpiece... that is why we have to focus so much on verse 25, when he says that we are ALL MEMBERS OF ONE

ANOTHER... because just like Paul will tell us in chapter 5 (v29) - nobody ever hated his own body... Jesus says it like this in the Sermon on the Mount - (Matthew 7:12) "whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them"

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Think about it... Its crucial that you understand what Paul means by saying we are all members of one another... because it is totally central to putting on the new self... You strip away all of the things that you were before Jesus... you strip away the selfishness... the "me" mentality... and you put on the new self... which is a part of the BODY of Christ.

if you view your life as being that closely and inner connected with the people that you are in community with, then of course the hard conversations will be done IN LOVE... because you love YOURSELF!... and when you realize that in whatever ways you tear down another person, you are essentially dismembering your own body, you realize the care that has to be taken when having hard conversations.

Think of it like this... say you step on a nail that is sticking out of a board that was laying in your dining room... (we have a lot of those right now at our house) - the dining room analogy is really only applicable to my family... but you know that if you can get this nail out, you are going to be fine...

but a nail poked through your foot... You have already gotten your Tetanus shot, so you don't have to worry about that... but you are going to use care as you try and remove it. And *then*, you will likely go to the bathroom, and take the necessary time to clean your foot up really well in the bath tub... and put some alcohol on it.. or these days maybe some essential oils on it... then you will bandage it up real nicely and with a lot of care.

And even though it hurts... in the end, it will be okay, because you handled it with care. Because you saw all of the factors... it was worth it to stop everything you were doing... to stop your life for a few moments, and handle it.

but if instead, you leave it in... and you put your socks on over it, and your shoes on over it, and then you go to run that marathon that you signed up for...

(you were kind of in a predicament, because you already put the 26.2 sticker on your car!!!)

you may not have a foot by the end of that marathon.

Which seems crazy, but picture it like this... life has to slow down sometimes in order to bring health and healing. If you run a marathon because that was the plan for the day, without first getting the nail out, people would say you are insane. But we hurt each other in the body of Christ ALL THE TIME... we carry offenses against others, and we just go about our daily lives as if there isn't a nail ripping apart another part your body.

and I think that it is intentional how Paul throws anger in here in the midst of all of these words about community and how you relate to one another.

verse 26-27:

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

The devil works in gaps... and if you let your anger toward someone else create a space between you two that is not supposed to be there, He will fill it with whatever he can... Hebrews describes what happens as being a "roots of bitterness" that grow in that space, and it defiles many. And if anger isn't dealt with, it leaves that gap. and the only thing that can grow there is bitterness. There is nothing else that can grow in that soil. Nothing.

But it happens slowly.

The way Paul describes anger here is that of a slow burn... something that you let sizzle... not realizing that at any moment you could just totally explode.

again, more stats, but I read that people who are completely healthy, but are often angry are 19% more likely to get heart disease. Anger is more destructive than even anxiety and stress.

it just shows how interconnected we are designed to be to each other. If you stay angry at someone else, it takes a toll on *your* own body.

But anger is not ALWAYS a bad thing... that is why he says "be angry... but don't let it become sin." Anger by nature it is *destructive*, but what it really does, is it shows you what matters to you.

If someone does something that hurts you, or offends you, and you get ANGRY about it... and you direct that destructive energy toward THEM for it, what that shows is that: they hurt something that matters to you. But in that moment, IF -IF IF IF IF - if it is anger that is driving the confrontation, then it won't be the truth in love... and the MESSAGE you will likely be sending to your brother or sister in Christ will be: that whatever they did to you... whatever they hurt or messed up in your life... THAT THING is more valuable to you, than they are.

So its important that we are slow to anger. And when we do get angry, we work it out, we process it. and wonder "Why does this bother me so much?" and maybe even ask the question "What is most valuable here?"

We have to process and then allow ourselves to move on... we can't just keep holding on to the things that people have done to us.

Ecclesiastes (7:9) says that "anger *lodges* in the heart of fools."

Anger makes its home in the heart of fools.

There is a difference between being hurt, and being angry. Anger will bring you some clarity... it will show you what is most important in that moment, but you have to have enough wisdom to be able to see that sometimes, the things that are most important to us, aren't the things that are actually the most important.

So Paul gives us a little room here... He says, "its okay to be angry" - but its not okay to let it lodge, because it is destructive energy, and it will turn you into a destructive person.

Don't walk through life with a nail stuck in your foot. Don't let it lodge, while you keep running.

Rather... speak the truth to one another... speak the truth to the ones who are members of the same exact body that you are...

but speak it in love.

Sometimes the truth hurts... and sometimes the truth is that *you are hurt*.

and we have to be able to communicate those things toward one another... it is a sign of spiritual maturity... spiritual growing up... when we cultivate relationships that are made stronger through honesty... but it takes work... because the natural pull, is away.

Naturally, when we see something in someone else that we DON'T LIKE, the instinct is to pull away from them.

How quickly we forget the broken place that Jesus met us in...

and from the other perspective:

Naturally when we KNOW there is something in *our* life that is not as it should be, the natural instinct is to pull away and make sure that nobody sees *that* in us...

we don't want peoples opinions... or even their bible verses... we would rather live life from this, sort of, island perspective... where we figure ourselves out.... because we don't want people to try and fix us... or judge us.

but it doesn't work... because relationships were designed to heal us, and to grow us...

and growing up in maturity in Christ, it only happens as we begin to grow up more and more together, in our community.

But we need each other. We need relationships.

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Let me show you something, and I hope that this blesses you and helps you in your relationships. And I by NO means claim to be an expert on this. I understand it in principle far more than I do in practice, because the truth is, RELATIONSHIPS ARE HARD.

In every relationship... there are four “zones,” if you will... four areas of life that exist, and hopefully, we can get to a place where most of our lives are spent in numbers 1 and 4... but unfortunately... most people spend their whole lives in 2 and 3, and they never communicate enough to move forward... And here they are...

#1 is the things in life... the things IN MY LIFE... that I know, and you know.

I know they are there... and you know they are there... I know my flaws, and IT IS OBVIOUS to you that those are my flaws... hopefully I have even had open conversations with you about it, which are helping me grow... helping me in my struggle.

But for most people, these are surface things... first layer, not very deep things. Because we only let out so much of ourselves to others... it is a much safer zone to live in.

but then, there are (#2) the things in life that I know, but YOU DON'T KNOW.

And this, sadly, is where most of us live the majority of our lives... in private.

There is the life that we really have, and then the life that we make everyone else think we have... with our public smiles on Sundays at church

following a tear filled morning... and our exciting Facebook posts, and our perfectly framed instagram photos.

The problem is, there is an almost infinite amount of depth to each and every one of us, and yet we live in this zone where we barely scratch the surface of WHO WE EVEN ARE... when we are in communities with people... and we miss out on so much because of it! Things we have in common, BUT HAVE NO IDEA... things we can't figure out on our own, but never talk about... not knowing that the person sitting next to us JUST FIGURED OUT that same situation in their life.

Here is the truth... and its terribly sad:

Life has taught us to keep our relationships at an arms length.

It has. And I genuinely regret having to admit to this... but I wrote "us" because I do believe that it is a broad statement that likely covers most all of us... but I could easily have said "Life has taught *me* to keep *my* relationships at an arms length."

This is what I mean by that: It is one thing for me to teach the bible... to teach about having open conversations, about opening your home, about working out your salvation with the help of other likeminded believers...

but when I try and let people in, in *that* capacity, I begin to think very quickly that they likely won't like what they see. and I am sure that in most instances, they probably DON'T. Because I know my junk. And the closer they get to me, the more of that junk they will see. So even though we are in community together, I am constantly trying to make sure that they see me at my best, rather than see me as the person that I actually am, which sometimes, isn't all that great...

Because the truth is people are judgmental. And I don't want to be judged.

But its in those rare instances that I really open up, when I am going through something, whatever it may be, that I really see who my REAL friends are... I really see who understands compassion, and empathy, and

appreciates honesty even more than perfection. and really, it even shows me who understands the gospel and what it means for all of our lives.

But what happens is, if you open up yourself to someone, and it goes BADLY... you are going to have to work twice as hard to open up to someone again. and then if it happens *again*... you are just adding these layers around your heart, trying to protect yourself, when really you are killing yourself. And you will be less and less likely to speak the truth to people... because it always comes back on you... so instead, we stuff the truth, behind the layers that we have put around our hearts...

and its a dangerous place to be... but it is where I think that a lot of us live, most of our lives.

or here is another angle on that:

Dawn and I were once talking to another couple in ministry together, they pastored a church... and one thing that they told us was that they have gotten out of the *counseling* business entirely... for so long they met with people about their problems... they met with couples about their marriages, he met with individuals about their addictions, their secret sins, the people that they have hurt... the ways that they have been hurt...

but he said that he started to notice that it was never very long after they were through all of that, that he started seeing less and less of the couple, or less and less of the person.

and before long, the people who had, in a healthy way, taken advantage of the many things that the church offers... suddenly was not a part of it at all. and he attributed this pattern to this:

“We just knew *too much*.”

People think that when others know the darkest things about their lives, that we judge them differently, view them differently, think of them differently.

but we all have things going on in the darkest places of our hearts.

and that is not to excuse it, but IF you can never process what is going on, there will never be healing... and healing has to take place within the context of a community and sometimes wounds heal slowly.

But if every time you get close enough in a community where people actually begin to know the real you... the good, the bad, and the ugly... if every time you get there you get scared of it, and leave and go try and find somewhere new to blend in to and “start over” you will find yourself 10, 15, 20 years from now very lonely, because what our hearts all desire is to be fully known, and at the same time, fully accepted. We want to be accepted just as we are... even though we all know that there are a million things that we can change in our lives that would make us better people.

But most of us don't even give ourselves a chance at those types of relationships.

See, when Paul in verse 24 tells us to put on the new self, he is not talking about behavior modification, even though your behavior will most definitely modify. Right before he says to put on the new self, he says this: (v23)

be renewed in the spirit *of your minds*.

The literal is: “In the Spirit of your minds, be made new.” Paul actually says this, as in something that is constantly taking place in you... in your *thinking*.

You have to change the way that you think... you have to let God get a hold of your heart and really do a number there.

And what we need to realize, and hopefully this helps us take off our masks... is we all had an old self... we are all being made new every single day... the new self is ongoing... it is not one and done.

The bible says that “his mercies are NEW every morning” (Lamentations 3:22-23)

But Paul says put away the old self...

put away bitterness. and put on forgiveness.
put away wrath. and put on mercy.
put away anger. and clamor. and slander.
put away all malice.

and put on the new self... becoming a person who doesn't think about themselves and their needs OVER the needs of the community...
becoming a person who learns from others... builds up people.

put away selfish. and put on generosity.

Live your life worthy of your calling... worthy of the price that Jesus paid for you... see, Jesus, HE SHOULD TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE.

Paul gives us another example, verse 28 in a lot of ways seems out of place here, but it really isn't:

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

This is fascinating, that this passage would get dropped in here, in the middle of all of these things about how we talk about each other, and too each other, and how we handle problems, and live together in community... but there is something to this.

Until you get caught... stealing is one of those "you know it is there, but nobody else knows is there." You see it, maybe others don't.

Its very secretive, and if you study stealing, you understand that for a lot of people, it is actually a way of fulfilling something inside of them.

See, when you steal, you are meeting a need that you may or may not have, in a selfish way... or you are filling a desire that you have by taking something from someone else. But what can happen, is you can experience the rush of actually getting away with stealing, and before long, you may go back out again, even if you don't need anything... because of

that “high” - - - that is what the term “kleptomaniac” means... it means you “steal for the thrill of stealing.” which is considered an incurable *mental disorder* - something happened in your mind... maybe at first you stole because you thought that you needed something... but before long, you are stealing because YOU NEED TO STEAL. Its an addiction. If you are a “thief” as Paul puts it, its ongoing... he says “steal no longer” - its a recurring problem...

But what Paul does is he presents *the new self*... and in doing so he doesn't just take away the thing that was feeding the person... he doesn't just modify the behavior by saying “no!” “DON'T STEAL!” - instead, he shows them HOW to fill that *same* need, in a healthy way.

He shows them how to fill that drive in their heart, with something that will advance the Kingdom... and ultimately will take off the mask and tear down the walls...

see, stealing is secretive and destructive.

But when you give *to* something that is bigger than yourself... and then you begin to see *the fruit* of that gift... and the blessings that maybe are coming back *ON YOU* because of that gift, and most importantly, the Kingdom of God moving forward BECAUSE of that gift... THAT IS SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF... its that same kind of exhilarating energy that stealing produces only it is directed in the right place, this time.

you see? “In the spirit of your mind, be made new!” You are feeding the same source that those desires come from, but now you are doing it in a way that is about community. and about other people. In a way that there would be no need to wear a mask or to hide what you are doing.

Now you are working, and anytime there is a need, you can meet it!

Have you ever had someone come to you with a really legitimate need... that seemed really big, and you could see the hopelessness in their eyes, like there was no way that they would be able to solve this...

and then, because of God's crazy provision in *your* life, you were able to look at them and say "you know what, I got this!" and then hand them a check on the spot? Or hand them your car keys on the spot because you had just gotten a new car and you were praying about what to do with the old one... or you knew that you could go get another one... and they need it more than you in this moment... Whatever it may be, you could give them exactly what they needed?

If you have ever been in a situation like that, then you know how good it feels to be able to bless someone.

We don't do it for the feeling that we get, we don't feed people to feed our ego...

BUT WE GET THE FEELING FOR A REASON!

and what Paul is saying in verse 28 is much more broad than just stealing. He is saying, "when you put on the new self, you still get the feeling...

you still get the rush... but this time, the COMMUNITY benefits." He is saying, "this is a better way." - its about community! Its about contribution to the body! It is about killing isolation, and the habits that are formed in order to keep it fed...

and Renewing your mind... to think about others.

verse: 29:

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

And we are back to what Paul says in verse 15... speaking the truth in love. As long as you couple truth with love, then whatever is coming out of your mouth will NOT be corrupt. It will always be for building up. Even the hard conversations... even the confrontational conversations where you know going in thinking: "this could go very badly if this person hears this the wrong way..."

its possible to say the right thing in the wrong way, and it could be just as destructive as saying the wrong thing... You could say the right thing, but it could be filled with anger because of how YOU LET THAT THING affect you... and suddenly something that could be building a bridge for someone, is now burning it to the ground.

but growing up spiritually means we have the hard conversations... But first we make sure that Love is central to the conversation. BUT YOU HAVE TO HAVE THE CONVERSATIONS!

because in all honesty, sometimes there are things in my life THAT I NEED you to point out to me... things that maybe I don't see. Maybe they are blindspots... and that is the third "zone" in relationships...

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SO... there are the things that I know and you know... there are the things that I know, but you don't know... (the masks)

and then there are the blind spots. (#3) its the things that "you know, but I don't even know." (about me!!!)

The things that ARE THERE in my life... that I don't even realize are there... I don't see them...

but you see them.

Its the food in the teeth... or the bummer that you can't feel but its just hanging there... and everyone in the room sees it.

the truth is... its there. I can't see it... but you see it... and if you love me, you need to help me see it...

hopefully you would tell me before I go on stage and teach a message to our church with the bummer falling on to my face.

and it could be something that really only affects me... or it could be something that I am doing, that you are feeling.

maybe its something that I said, that offended you... something I do, that to me I think nothing of, but it upsets people... and every time I do this thing or that thing, someone who hasn't gotten to know me very well decides to just give up on me... and I have no idea why... but you know exactly what it is...

How long do we let that go on?

but these are the conversations that are much harder to have. Because I could be headed down a destructive path that the devil is using to subtly derail my life... the little foxes, as Solomon says... When Solomon talks about marriage, he says that it is the little foxes that spoil the vine... things that you don't necessarily even think are a big deal.

The Hebrew word there for "little" means "insignificant," sometimes even "unimportant"

But often times, those are the things that kill relationships... the "unimportant" things... the things that we cast aside as being insignificant... things that we can't even see their affect, and so we let them go unmentioned, until it compiles into something more.

A snarky comment... a bad joke... I KNOW I TELL A LOT OF THOSE... a minor offense... and you know "that person loves me..."

"Pastor Jake and Dawn love me... they didn't mean that."

so you don't say anything to us about the way that what we said *hurt you*... but you wrote it into your heart... and the more and more you think about it the more and more it bothers you...

and before long you end up back at the top... angry.

The thing that is so complicated about BLIND SPOTS... is you REALLY CAN'T see them in yourself! THERE ARE things in my life I just need to

have pointed out for me. My wife does this for me sometimes... and its so hard to hear. But that is why the approach is everything. speak the truth, but speak it in love.

I know my wife loves me... I know that my team loves me... and when someone talks to me about something like that... I know its because they care. But its hard to hear.

SO...

I know, and you know.
I know, but you don't know.
I don't know, but you know.

and number 4 is:

I don't know, and you don't know... but God knows.

This is potential. Because everyone has it. And when we put on the new self, this becomes the zone that we should all be living in, every day.

Always seeing people for who they could be... always knowing that there are things behind the things that we do see... we know there is pain... we know there is hurt... but we also know that there is HOPE.

There is a future. There is a destiny.

One of our main theme verses here at Courage Church is 2 Corinthians 5... the ministry of reconciliation... you hear it a lot from us...

and the place that we normally read begins in verse 16 when it says "from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh... because when He is in Christ, that person is a NEW CREATION."

We don't see people for what they were... WE DON'T EVEN SEE PEOPLE FOR WHAT THEY ARE...

we see people for what Christ did.

and if you back it up just 2 verses, verse 14 says something incredible, it kind of sets the page for the rest of the passage... it says:

For the love of Christ *controls* us. (2 Corinthians 5:14)

The Greek word for “controls” that Paul uses there, literally means “to hold together.”

The love of Christ HOLDS US TOGETHER. Everything in our lives... when we put on the new self... is controlled by the love of Christ... and the love of Christ is REAL BIG. It met us in our messes... it was on my worst day, that Jesus Christ laid down his life so that I wouldn't have to suffer for my own bad decisions.

Paul spends half the book emphasizing: the new self is not something that you can do on your own... you can't work so hard that you achieve it. God has to do something amazing in your life.

Before he ever tells you to put on the new self, he first shows you all the ways that Christ GAVE UP HIMSELF. But when Paul says it here, he says:

put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

He says... be like Jesus. Who showed us what it means to make decisions that were NOT in his best interest... but were in the best interest of the body. In fact, they were in the best interest of the whole world.

And if nothing else, I pray that you hear and understand two things today...

1. Jesus died because YOU and I have lived for ourselves. He was selfless, because we are selfish.
2. The new self is a renewing of the mind, that for maybe the first time in your whole life, begins to think that same way... it thinks about everyone else.

Lets Pray.