

Focus on Ephesians 4:25–5:2

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Jaime Clark-Soles

The author insists that we need to speak truth because we actually are all part of one another. Not speaking truth to each other is tantamount to not speaking truth to ourselves, and vice versa. We could dispense with this verse as some sort of temporary insanity on the part of the author, were it not the case that he repeatedly returns to the themes of speaking truth (vv. 15–16, 21) and our connection with our Christian brothers and sisters. Without truth, authentic community fails.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” G. Porter Taylor

Christianity has yet to grasp the full implication of the incarnation: the Word has become flesh and dwells all around us. Paul is calling for these early Christians not merely to worship God in Christ, but through the Holy Spirit to imitate Christ in their own behavior, for the sake of the Christ’s church and the sake of the world. They are to forgive as they have been forgiven. They must turn from wrangling and slander and turn instead toward kindness and forgiveness for Christ’s sake. We imitate Christ in hopes that through the Holy Spirit we will grow into the likeness of Christ and that God will use us as instruments to bring in God’s realm of peace, justice, and mercy.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Paul V. Marshall

A final motivation for inhabiting the virtues that protect and deepen community is the writer’s understanding of Christ’s work as sacrifice. The ancient world believed that offerings had an olfactory quality that pleased the deity. Christ’s surrender to God was motivated by love, and Christians are here invited to follow suit, understanding their own lives as pleasingly sacrificial. There has been much quarreling in Christian circles over whether we have anything to offer God, whether Christians should ever speak of any sacrifice except that of Christ. One may wish to fence the word in such a way as to exclude the idea of sacrifice as motivating God to act or to be well disposed toward those who offer, but the idea of offering one’s attitude and behavior from a desire to respond pleasingly to love of God seems inescapable.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”

Richard F. Ward

The writer chooses “forgiveness” as a theme. This is a word for the church, not just for individuals in it. For this writer, to be “forgiven” is to be “pardoned.” God has done something “in Christ” that forgives or pardons all those who take this letter to heart, and in recognition of that action, recipients of God’s forgiveness and pardon freely offer it to others in kind.