

“Off with the Old; On with the New”

August 4, 2024

Ephesians 4:17-24

I. Introduction

It's been a while since we began our study of the Book of Ephesians and recently, we have had a couple of interruptions, so let me remind you that Ephesians was written to Christians—particularly to those in Ephesus, but this letter is applicable to all Christians. Paul wrote to remind Christians of all the blessings they have in Jesus Christ and how they can claim and enjoy them. In the first three chapters Paul emphasized doctrine or theology as he described these blessings. Chapter 4 began the practical or applied section---claiming and enjoying the blessings in Christ Jesus. With that goal in mind chapter 4 began with “**I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.**” Paul was saying, “*Here is what Christ has done for you, Now, considering all that, here is what we ought to do for Christ.*” **James 1:22** puts it this way, “**Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.**”

In the first verse of today's Scripture, Paul got more emphatic, “**So I tell you, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as Gentiles, i.e., unbelievers, do.**” When one becomes a Christian, there is a transformation. **Romans 6:4** says, “**We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**” **2 Corinthians 5:17** says, “**Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come.**” The new nature of a Christian is not added to the old nature but replaces it. A Christian is no longer dead in sin, he is alive in Christ. He has put off the old and has put on the new. In today's verses, Paul gave four characteristics of the walk of the old man and then four characteristics of the walk of the new man.

II. Characteristics of the Old Man

A. Futile Thinking Paul wrote that the first characteristic of the old man is *futile thinking*. Christians think differently from the unsaved. Salvation begins with repentance, which is a change of mind. The whole outlook of a person changes when he trusts in Jesus Christ, including his values, his goals and even his

interpretation or meaning of life. The thinking of the old man—the unsaved man—is futile; i.e., it is empty, vain, with no real purpose. The unbeliever is busy with the pursuit of goals that are purely selfish; he accumulates things that are temporary and looks for satisfaction in things that are disappointing and soon disappear like a morning fog. He becomes his own ultimate authority, and he follows his own thinking to its self-centered end. Because he is his own god, the old man loses perception of any moral values. From the unbeliever’s viewpoint, there is no absolute truth—all truth is relative. His thinking is futile—useless. Solomon wrote in [Ecclesiastes 2:26](#) that without God, the worldly life is “**meaningless, a chasing after the wind.**”

B. Ignorance of God’s Truth This futile thinking is compounded with an ignorance of God’s truth. This is the 2nd characteristic of the old man: *ignorance of God’s truth*. Because he doesn’t know God, the unsaved person can’t truly understand the world around him or even understand himself. He thinks he is enlightened because he hardens his heart as he rejects the Bible and believes the latest philosophies, when in reality Paul wrote that “**they are darkened in their understanding.**” Our world today possesses a great deal of knowledge but very little wisdom. As [2 Timothy 3:7](#) says, “**Always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.**” Because he rejects God and His truth, man is incapable of knowing the truth. In [John 14:6](#), Jesus said, “**I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.**” Because the unbeliever doesn’t know Jesus Christ, he is ignorant of God’s truth—he is in the dark.

C. Loss of all Sensitivity Paul wrote that when people continue to sin and turn away from God, they become insensitive to moral and spiritual things; they have “**lost all sensitivity.**” This is the 3rd characteristic of the old man: loss of all sensitivity. Such people reject all standards of righteousness and do not care about the consequences of their sinful thoughts and actions. [1 Timothy 4:2](#) says that their “**consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.**” Their consciences become so scarred that they aren’t sensitive to wrong. When self-desire or selfishness rules, indecency runs wild and proceeds to sear—cauterize—the conscience. Anything becomes “fair game.” Just look at what is acceptable now days in movies and television shows, in

conversations and even in the things people do to one another. Even when held up in full view of the world, their sins are not recognized as sinful and a source of hopelessness, despair, and even death.

D. A Depraved Mind Futile thinking, ignorance of God's truth, and loss of all sensitivity are all part of a downward spiral which leads to the 4th characteristic of the old nature: a depraved mind. As Paul put it in **verse 19**: "They have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more." The old man, the old nature, the unbeliever is past feeling because he has *so* given himself over to sin that sin controls him. He doesn't care what others think or even what God thinks, he only seeks to gratify the cravings of his own warped mind. There is no absolute truth—truth is relative. Paul wrote about this in more detail in Romans. **Turn to Rom. 1:21-32.** The godless life becomes a mindless life.

III. Characteristics of the New Man

A. Christ Centered The Christian cannot—must not—pattern himself after the unsaved person. The Christian has experienced a miracle of being raised from the dead—he is a new man. His life is not futile and self-centered. It has a purpose and is Christ centered. Instead of being ignorant of God's truth, the new man knows and understands it. Instead of being callous to sin, the new man is sensitive to sin of every sort. Instead of being depraved in his thinking, the new man is righteous in his thinking. In every way, the believer is different from the unbeliever and therefore Paul insisted that "you must no longer live as the Gentiles—i.e. the unbelievers—do." The 1st characteristic of this new life is to be Christ centered.

To "know Christ" means to have a personal relationship with Christ so that one gets to know Him better each day. He recognizes Jesus' voice. The saved person looks to the Lord Jesus as his Shepherd. He listens to the Shepherd, and he follows Him. Jesus said in **John 10:27**, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." The ways of God and the ways of the world are incompatible. Salvation begins with repentance, a change of mind and action regarding sin, self, and God. The new man isn't centered on himself but is Christ centered and his purpose is to do God's will. The believer is different from the unbeliever in every way, he is "created to be like God in true Righteousness and holiness."

B. Knows God's Truth Instead of being ignorant of God's truth, the Christian has heard Christ and is taught by Him—he knows God's truth. In [Ephesians 1:13](#) Paul wrote, “You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” Salvation is just the beginning. Because the Christian has the Holy Spirit in his heart, he can read the Bible and through his daily study and experiences can grow in his personal knowledge of Christ and His truth day by day. [John 14:26](#) says, “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” As Christ centered children of God, the second characteristic of the new man is that he knows God's truth.

C. Delivered from the Old Man The experience of salvation results in a whole new position before God. This is the 3rd characteristic of the new man: he is delivered from the Old Man. Now through Christ Christians can walk in newness of life. Christians haven't simply changed their minds; they have changed their citizenship. The Christian has been delivered from the old man, the old nature. The old man—the former way of life—has been put away. As we read earlier in [2 Corinthians 5:17](#), “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” This is a new life; it is a transformation. Therefore, the ideas and desires of the old creation should no longer control a believer's life. The gospel invitation is to lay the old self aside in repentance from sin; this includes not just sorrow about sin but also turning from sin to God. The believer is saved from the power of sin and becomes a child of God.

D. Become a New Man In contrast to the old sinful man, the Christian is to put on the New Man—he is to become a new man. Through trust in Christ, once and for all, the believer is given a new position in God's creation. Each believer has become a new man, but it doesn't stop there. This change or renewal continues throughout the believer's life as he is obedient to God's Word and God's will. It is a continual work of the Holy Spirit in the child of God. [Turn to Romans 12:1-2.](#) In [Philippians 3:12](#) Paul wrote, “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which

Christ Jesus took hold of me.” As one grows in understanding the truth of God’s Word, he is gradually transformed by the Spirit, and this leads to a changed life—a life of true righteousness and holiness.

IV. Conclusion

Many rescue missions have a delousing room, where those from the streets who may not have had a bath in weeks or months discard all their old clothes and are thoroughly bathed and disinfected. The unsalvageable old clothes are burned, and new clothes are issued. The clean man is provided clean clothes.

This is a picture of salvation, except in salvation the new believer is not simply given a bath but a completely new nature. The continuing need of the Christian life is to keep discarding and burning the remnants of the old, sinful clothing. In **Romans 6:13** Paul wrote, **“Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.”**

God, through His love and grace, has given us much to be thankful for. We have been forgiven of our sins. We have a new life, a new Lord, a new nature, a new purpose, and a new power. Now, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we must live a life corresponding to the change in us. This new man or nature will grow as we read and study God’s Word and allow the Holy Spirit to mold us and change us—to transform us. There is a saying that you are what you eat. This may be true physically, but spiritually, you are what you think. **Proverbs 23:7** says, **“As he thinks within himself, so he is.”** This is why it is important for us as Christians to spend time daily meditating on the Word, praying, and fellowshiping with God—then we can begin to think like Him.

So, if you are a child of God, how is your growth going? Is the new nature becoming stronger every day? Are you becoming more Christ like? Can those around you see your family resemblance to God or not? Whose family do you resemble? May your motto be: Off with the old; on with the new!

Communion Devotion – August, 2024

I Corinthians 11:23-31

The Lord's Table is more than a monthly ritual—it is a time to consider what Jesus did for you and a time to consider your response. Restating **verses 28 and 29**: “A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks with no thought (or worse, no concern) about the broken body of Christ eats and drinks judgment on himself.” So, what have you done about Jesus' sacrifice for you? Have you put off the old and put on the new? In other words, have you, as **Romans 10:9** says, made Jesus your Lord and Savior? **John 3:36** says, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.” God says that there is only one way to get to heaven—in **John 14:6** Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” If you have prayed like the tax collector in **Luke 18:13** “God, have mercy on me, a sinner;” if you have accepted God's gift of eternal through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and if through the power of the Holy Spirit you have put on the new man, then whether or not you are a member of TBC, we invite you to join us at this Table.

As we come to the Lord's Table, as we examine ourselves, there are some basic questions: Is Jesus really your Lord? Do you do what Jesus wants you to do? Do you do what He tells us in the Bible, or do you rationalize some of the things away? “He's too harsh—times have changed.” “People would think you are weird.” “I have better plans.” In **John 14:15** Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command.” If Jesus is your Lord, there is NO wiggle room. Either you do what He says, or you don't—you allow the old man to have control—to be your lord. So, what is it: Does Jesus have all of your heart—all of you—or have you kept part for yourself? If He doesn't have all of you, then He really isn't your Lord. Get right with Him this morning—give Him all of you. He could force you to come to Him, but He wants you to freely choose. In **Revelation 3:20** Jesus said, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” Open the doors to every part of your heart—to every part of your life—today—before it is too late.