

Text: Eph 4:20-24

Title: Fundamentals of a Believer's Walk

Intro: How to live the Christian life—a doctrine of sanctification—how to grow and change into the likeness of Christ—how we are to battle sin

- Through the work of Christ, a sinner is united with Christ
- Until Christ returns, the believer strives to become what he has already been declared to be in Christ
- Prior to our conversion, we walked in darkness—we had no power over dominating sins—we had no help, no hope, we were ‘dead in our sins and transgressions’
- When you came to faith in Christ—you are granted the righteousness of Christ—you are now ‘dead to sin’ and ‘alive to Christ’

Prop: In 4:17-24, the Apostle Paul begins to show us how it is (specifically) that we are to live the new life in Christ—how we are to deal with the old man's attitudes and ways, and how we live the new life in Christ. Paul contrasts the old man's life with the new man's life that is in Christ Jesus—those in Christ with those outside the body of Christ.

Last time: In 4:17-19—we saw the ‘emptiness of a life without Christ’—we saw that ‘the old man that is corrupt and must be thrown off’

- There is nothing about the old man—his thinking, his attitudes, his ways—that is salvageable
- What is needed is a complete transformation
- ‘Regeneration’ is the most profound change the world will ever know
- We are ‘new creatures’ in Christ Jesus

The command: 4:17—“So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,”

The condition: “in the futility of their mind”—Lit ‘in the emptiness of their mind’—the wd refers to ‘vanity, purposelessness, futility, worthlessness’—‘that which fails to produce the desired result’—thus, the wd became a synonym for ‘empty’ because it amounts to nothing

The cause of the emptiness: 4:18—“being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;” —this is ‘culpable ignorance of God and His Word’

- A ‘clouded-over mind’ instead of an ‘illuminated mind’
- Paul's point is that ‘ignorance of Truth and sin are inseparable’—the ungodly may ever be learning but never able to come to the ‘knowledge of the truth’ (2 Tim 3:7).

The consequences: 4:19—“and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”

- D. Martin Lloyd-Jones: Calls the old life “a life which is decaying and putrefying.”¹

¹ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Darkness and Light: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:17–5:17* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 130.

- There's no 'improvement' that is possible.

"...have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness."

- There's an insatiable desire to participate in more forms of immorality. A vicious cycle because new perversions must be sought to replace old ones.
- According to Romans 1, God issues divine retribution by delivering one over to the full pursuit of sinful desires—to unnatural vices because he/she has rejected the revelation of God.
- In other wds, God gives men/women over to debauched lifestyles as a form of His righteous judgment.

"...have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness."—'greediness' is tied to 'sensuality'

- 'greediness'—is 'uninhibited lust for that which is wanted' (JM).
- An unbeliever evaluates life only in material terms (Luke 12:15), and uses people to his/her own advantage (1 Thess 2:5).
- It is idolatry—Col 3:5—"Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry."

When a person chooses to think his own way, to do things his own way, and to pursue his own destiny, he cuts himself off from God and His Word and becomes blind and without a moral compass. That is how the Bible describes every unbeliever.

- Without God's standard of morality, immorality becomes a way of life.
- As that is continued, it destroys the mind's ability to distinguish good/evil, truth/falsehood, and reality/pure fantasy.
- 2 Tim 3:13—"But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."—while some people are a little further ahead than others, it simply will not get better over time but worse.
- The only reason some people don't reach the extremes that Paul mentions is because of God's common grace to help restrain sin's spread—the church (Matt 5:13) and His Spirit—
- Job 34:14-15—"If He should determine to do so, If He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust."

The only real hope and help comes from God through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. The new man in Christ Jesus. The divine exception—the divine '180'—4:20-21—"But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,"—Lit 'you now not this way learned the Christ'.—this is a direct reference to salvation—to 'learn Christ' is to be saved.

- The new walk in Christ is the exact opposite of the old walk of the flesh
- The 'way of Christ' is not the 'way of the old man'
- There has been an internal 'one-eighty' in the life of the believer. The new man is created by God—he's been taught by God the Father—and, the result is: there's no getting away from this new reality.

- The new walk in Christ is the exact opposite of the old walk of the flesh. Being created new in Christ, we have a complete inward reversal—180 degrees—an opposite moral direction (even though a moment-by-moment challenge).
- Prior to knowing Christ, you, by the old, corrupt nature, had a bent toward evil—the Scriptures say that you had no moral capacity to do what is good
- What about ‘free will’???—you have freedom to make moral choices, just you have no capacity to act contrary to your fallen nature
 - Since the Fall (Gen 3), man is depraved and always seeks things for his own pleasure—he manipulates people and circumstances for satisfying his own evil desires.
 - Even the ‘good’ we might attempt to do is done for selfish ends
 - Even religious things we might do is only for the exaltation of self (varying degrees of self-righteousness).
- Thus, God had to break into your life—he invaded your life and made some permanent changes that you would not and could not do on your own.
- 4:17-19—tells us that the old man had a futile way of thinking, a darkened understanding...
- The ways of God and the ways of the world are completely incompatible—Ill—like trying to load a Windows software program on a Mac computer.
- One of the first things a Christian must realize is that he CANNOT trust his own thinking or rely on his own way.
- 2 Cor 5:15—"and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."
- At conversion, the believer is given the ‘mind of Christ’ through the ministry of God’s Word.
- 1 Cor 2:16—"For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."—Christ’s ‘mind and thoughts’ is the only mindset that is trustworthy and reliable.
- Gal 2:20—"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

‘learning Christ’ means submitting to Him—to His teaching—submitting to His rule over your life.

- There’s no such thing as receiving Christ as ‘Savior’ and not ‘Lord’ over your life.
- ‘learn...heard...taught’—in the proclamation of the gospel, they ‘learned’ of Christ—while ‘heard’ and ‘taught’ imply that gospel preaching was reinforced with ongoing instruction

The discarding of the old life and walking in the new life.

4:22—"that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,"

- The old man is ‘not serviceable’
- The old man can only further ungodliness—it’s the old way that is always destructive to the new life.
- Moreover, you should never ignore the pains and wreckage of the old man’s ways—they are reminders that we CANNOT pursue that life any longer.
- The old life is filled with deceit and corruption.

- The old life offers all kinds of pleasures and benefits—but they are lies—they never satisfy, they never benefit, they only further ungodliness, unfruitfulness, and decay.
- Sin always deceives and leads to hardening of the heart if that path is pursued.

You don't want to ignore the path of truth and become a 'hardened sinner' that needs severe consequences to get your attention (Psalm 32).

The only real hope and help comes from God through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because man is dead in sin, his only hope must come from outside of him.

- What the Apostle Paul wants us to know is that all of the old man—his ways, his thinking, his attitudes, has no ultimate power over the life of the believer.
- When God saves a sinner, there's no going back to the old life.
- All the sins of the past CANNOT drag you back to the guilt-ridden, darkened mind of your former existence.
- Col 3:3—"For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."
- 2 Cor 5:17—"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."
- We have a new way of life—a new inward pull toward righteousness
- When you trust Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you stand on solid ground—you are granted the righteousness of Christ—you are indwelt and empowered by His HS—you have a conscience wiped clean
- Rom 6:11—"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."—'consider'—the idea is 'have confidence to the point of affecting your actions'
- We are in a battle every day to starve the flesh and yield to the new pull towards righteousness.

'You did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him'—the concessive clause introduces 'hearing'—What does that mean? 'You heard the message of Christ and believed'—it means 'hearing and obeying'—'learning Christ' means submitting to him—to his teaching—to his rule over your life.

- You no longer resisted the Truth and suppressed the Truth in unrighteousness.
- There was real conviction of sin through the message believed.
- You believed God to be who his Word says he is.
- You heard the message and the 'love of Christ' flooded your soul—you heard Him with 'ears of faith'
- The same idea in John 17:6-8, when Jesus prays for his disciples—"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me."
- God invaded your life and gave you a new direction, a new heart, new motives, new priorities, new everything
- At conversion, the believer is given the 'mind of Christ' through the ministry of God's Word.

- 1 Cor 2:16—"For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."—Christ's mind and thoughts is the only one that is reliable.
- The closest parallel is Col 2:6-7—"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude."
- 2 Cor 5:15—"and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."
- Gal 2:20—"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

"...and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,"—it was received as instruction from God—the idea is 'you, for once in your life, saw the truth about the old life and saw the truth about the new life and there was real understanding'

- According to 1 Cor 2—the old man needs the HS to 'convince you' of the truth about your need for Christ—you heard the message and you no longer resisted—you received it
- God brings convincing that this is truth—and there's a change—a moral transformation
- Prior to your conversion, someone gave you the truth and you never saw the old man rightly—you never saw your need for Christ and his righteousness—Now, you 'have heard' with ears of faith
- If it is true that you have heard and received this instruction—there must be a new direction

'learn...heard...taught'—in the proclamation of the gospel, they 'learned' of Christ— This is the instruction that you heard with ears of faith: 4:22—There's a laying aside of the old self and walking in the new life...you cannot live the way you used to live.

4:22—"that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,"—significant that Paul uses three infinitive verbs (not imperatives) here. Paul is not commanding actions but reminding of saving truths we have already experienced at conversion—this is what you were taught in connection with Christ.

- The verb tenses (aorists) refer to a definite and permanent break from 'all' of the old man.

Appl—the moment the Lord saved me, I knew (internally) that I could not go on living the way I had previously.

- I knew zero knowledge of theology. As a new believer, I didn't even have my own Bible for a couple weeks.
- I owned nothing of any kind of religious materials—none.
- In spite of all that I didn't have and had yet to learn and discover, I knew this for certain—"I could not live any longer as a pagan"
- I had no idea what that meant—everything was brand new for me
- I knew I couldn't frequent the places I once did and hang out with the people I once did...I knew that intrinsically through the gospel of truth—what I heard and learned from Christ
- The Spirit's power was at work in the inner man.

The text uses terminology of 'taking/throwing off an old garment'

- The former manner of life is ‘put off’
- The old man is ‘not serviceable...worn out’—like an old, worn-out wheel bearing—it’s no longer serviceable
- The old man’s sinful patterns and pleasures are of no eternal value—they are useless, empty, futile
- The old man can only further ungodliness—the old way is always harmful and destructive to the new life.
- The analogy is a ‘coat’ that is ‘thrown off’
- Lit ‘you put off the former manner of life old man’—all of him
- ‘old’—‘that which is obsolete’ (BDAG)—the old man’s life is a waste of resources

“...which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,”—this is how the Apostle Paul wants us to view the old man—we’re to see the old man like this: ‘it can only run in the opposite direction’—you were converted and given an inward one-eighty...the old man can only go in the direction of depravity and destruction

- The old life is filled with deceit and corruption.
- The old life offers all kinds of pleasures and benefits—but they are lies—they never satisfy, they never benefit, they only further ungodliness, unfruitfulness, and decay.
- Sin always deceives and leads to hardening of the heart if that path is pursued.
- Whenever we give in to the old man’s habits/ways—there are consequences

Moreover, you should never ignore the pains and wreckage of the old man’s ways—they are reminders that we CANNOT pursue that life any longer.

- In other wds, you don’t want to ignore the painful consequences that sins of the old life bring and become a ‘hardened sinner’ that needs severe consequences to get your attention (Psalm 32).
- Paul is reminding us that the old man’s ways is always a story with a bad ending.

Notice: The old man is ‘being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit’—Lit ‘according to deceitful desires’

- These are not just ‘cravings’ but ‘deceitful cravings’—they promise something but never deliver.
- When you pursue those things, you always wind up empty...unfulfilled.
- The conscience gets numbed to the truth that there has been a change on the inside.
- Heb 3:12-13—“Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”—sin always deceives—and when you keep giving in to it, the mind is darkened, and hardness of heart towards the truth results
- If you want to know how to live, it’s never in the direction of the old man.

4:23—“and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,”—before the outer man can act rightly, there must be right thinking in the inside

- Spiritual renewal has occurred, but we must press into the new moral understanding that’s been granted us by God through His Spirit

- In other wds, ‘you’ve been renewed in the inner man at conversion—now live out your renewal...God has given you a new way of thinking—now start thinking according to the new man’—we’re to start thinking like the HS thinks—we’re to start thinking with the ‘mind of Christ’
 - Before Paul deals with behaviors in 4:25ff—he says, ‘start thinking with the mind God has already given to you...you HAVE been given the mind of Christ, now start thinking in the direction that God has enabled you to think’
 - The verb is passive—‘be renewed’
 - You see things differently—you see life differently, you understand the purpose in life, that it’s not about you but about God and His glory. Carnal things of the past now bother you—sinful attitudes and actions of the past (personal weaknesses) now irritate you.
 - The ‘inner control center’ (the mind) has totally transformed by God—and you’re to keep moving in that direction.
 - This is NOT merely thinking ‘happy thoughts’ or the ‘power of positive thinking’
 - This IS a moral transformation...a ‘complete replacement of the moral drivetrain’
- Rom 12:2—“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”—you cannot be transformed merely on the outside—through ‘behavioral modification’
- We must pursue what God wants for us. We must pursue what God tells us—everything that is good and acceptable.
- The result is a ‘pure’ or ‘clean’ conscience. When you think with a renewed mind, the conscience is not burdened with guilt. When you know that your sins are forgiven, the conscience is wiped clean.
- Titus 1:15—“To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.”—the burden you once carried around is lifted—you see sin rightly and are now able to move away from it.
- ‘mind-renewal’—means a clean mind and heart—a clear conscience

4:24—“and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

- ‘new self’—‘new’ (kainos)=‘entirely new’—the opposite of the old—you are transformed for new usefulness to God’s eternal glory
- The ‘new self’ is ‘new’ because it has been created ‘in the likeness of God’—Lit ‘according to what God is’
- 2 Peter 1:4—says we are ‘partakers of the divine nature’
- Gal 6:15—“For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”
- There’s no ‘synergism’ with the old.

5:1—“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;”—that’s only possible because of the new man that’s ‘created according to God’

“...in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”—the new man resembles God in righteousness and in holiness—the likeness of Adam in his pre-fallen state.

- The ‘new self’ is made useful for God’s purposes

- Instead of being ‘of no value’ (futile) you are now ‘useful’ in the Master’s hands.
- ‘has been created’—this has already happened—this new self is a reality already accomplished

Everything about the new life is moving towards these two things: righteousness and holiness. Imperfect as we are, we press on towards these two things. We cannot go back to all the filthy stuff of the old life.

Next time: 4:25ff—‘Therefore...’

- Truth replaces lies
- Restraint replaces sinful anger
- Giving replaces taking
- Edification replaces tearing down
- Kindness replaces bitterness

Implications:

- James 4:4 says that ‘friendship with the world is hostility towards God’—so, the one who makes a ‘profession of faith’ and does not make efforts to break with old sinful habits, has good reason to doubt his conversion.
- There’s no such thing as receiving Christ as ‘Savior’ and not ‘Lord’ over your life.