

A Brand-New Life

Text: Ephesians 4:17-27

Introduction:

1. This chapter: In brief, God says in chapters 1-3, "I have made you a saint." In chapters 4-6, He says, "Now, live a saintly life." **You are a saint now live like a saint!**
2. This section (Vs. 17-32): The Apostle Paul exhorts the believers concerning another major facet of their walk. In the first part of the chapter the exhortation was to "walk worthy" (Vs. 1). This second section really continues that general theme with a strong emphasis on the need to walk distinctly. We are called to a distinct and separated walk as God's people – a life that is different to the way we used to live. In short, we are called to live a brand-new life as God's children.
3. This lesson (Vs. 17-27): We will consider this separated walk we are called to as believers under 3 headings.

I. THE PORTRAIT OF THE OLD LIFE (VS. 17-19)

A. The Forbidding of the Old Life Declared (Vs. 17a)

1. 'therefore' = on the basis of the preceding teaching. Connects back to the theme introduced in Vs. 1 of walking worthy. We are to walk in a way that is consistent with our new position in Christ. Paul is now going to give further details of what that walk looks like in practice.
2. "testify in the Lord" = this was a solemn declaration on the part of the Apostle. This adds weight and authority to what he is about to say. What he is about to say is absolute for the Christian life!
3. "henceforth walk not" = the word 'henceforth' means "from this time forward" (Webster), no longer, no more. They were not to live like they had in the past.
4. "as other Gentiles walk" = remember this church was located in pagan Ephesus under the shadow of the temple of Diana. It was so vital that in a polluted, degraded, and sinful society such as Ephesus that the believers uphold a godly testimony in their lives. To apply it to our lives today we could say "Don't walk as other Australians walk!"

B. The Features of the Old Life Detailed (Vs. 17b-18)

Paul now proceeds to remind his readers of what the unbelieving lifestyle looks like. Paul diagnoses the problem from the symptom to the source (root cause). We could summarize it in 5 words. The unsaved world walks in:

1. Emptiness (Vs. 17b)
 - a. 'vanity' = the word means emptiness, futility, that which is devoid of truth. The word contains the idea of aimlessness, leading to no object or end.
 - b. "of their mind" = the unbeliever orders his behavior according to the empty philosophies and ideals of his own sinful heart and that of the unbelieving world around him. When man makes

In Christ - Ephesians Series

himself the standard for morality, you end up with the sort of chaos described in the Book of Judges where every man “did that which was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6; 21:25)

- c. Harry Ironside: “Unsaved men have illusions of their own minds; they see mirages of all kinds and imagine them to be real but they are not. They believe all sorts of theories, scholastic ideas, and such like, and would even bring this blessed Book to the bar of their theories instead of bringing their theories to the test of the Word of God. The Christian ought to be concerned about these things, and not walk in the delusions of the fleshly mind, for these poor Christless men, whatever their talents, whatever their culture, whatever their education, have the understanding darkened, have never been born of God, and are incapable of taking in divine things.”
2. Darkness (Vs. 18a)
 - a. ‘understanding’ = intelligence, the mind as an organ of thinking. 1 Cor. 2:14 “But **the natural man** receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”
 - b. ‘darkened’ = spiritual and moral darkness. The same word is used to describe the darkening of the sun in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:29). What people often hail as ‘enlightenment’ and ‘progress’ is actually the darkness of sin and evil.
 3. Deadness (Vs. 18b)
 - a. ‘alienated’ = means to be estranged or separated from. Same word is translated “being aliens” in Eph. 2:12.
 - b. “the life of God” = spiritual life that comes from God. The unbeliever may be alive physically, mentally and emotionally but he is dead spiritually (Eph. 2:1). What a tragedy! However, if you are saved, you’ve been made alive in Christ (quicken)!
 4. Blindness (Vs. 18c)
 - a. “through the ignorance that is in them” = the reason why they are separated from the life of God is given. They are ignorant on account of the “blindness of their heart”.
 - b. “that is in them” = “their alienation had its cause not in something external, casual or superficial, but in themselves.” (Wuest)
 - c. Note: Ignorance does not equal innocence. This is an ignorance that comes as a result of a deliberate rejection of the truth. The scoffers of the last days are described in 2 Peter 3:3-7 as being “willingly ignorant”.
 - d. Romans 1: 21 “Because that, **when they knew God**, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their **foolish heart was darkened.**” Observe that this is the opposite order to that proposed by the evolutionists who suggest that human being’s concept of God has evolved.

C. The Fruit of the Old Life Described (Vs. 19)

In Christ - Ephesians Series

Darkened beliefs lead to depraved actions. Evil philosophies lead to evil lifestyles. The fruit is:

1. A Damaged Conscience (Vs. 19a)
 - a. “past feeling” = the word means “to cease to feel pain or grief” (Strongs). It means “to become callous, insensible to pain. The lack of moral feeling and discernment means the inability to exercise any restraint.” It describes “the heart which has ceased to be sensible to the stimuli of conscience” (Ellicott). “As the sinner goes on in darkness, he sears his conscience and stops feeling guilty about what he is doing.” (Phillips)
 - b. Just as there is a pain response triggered by the nerves when the body is injured, a guilt response is triggered by the conscience when we sin. 1 Timothy 4:2 warns of a conscience that has been “seared with a hot iron.”
 - c. Illustration: Imagine if your nerves in a particular part of your body did not register pain? Great damage would be the result as there would be no pain to warn you that a particular form of conduct is detrimental to your health.
2. A Depraved Conduct (Vs. 19b)

There are 3 Bible words describing this depraved lifestyle:

 - a. Lasciviousness = unbridled, unrestrained lust, particularly in sexual matters. The same Greek word is translated “filthy conversation” (2 Pet. 2:7) and ‘wantonness” (2 Pet. 2:18). Josephus, the Jewish Historian, used the word to describe a Roman soldier who indecently exposed himself in the temple during the Passover.
 - i. Wuest says it “describes a person who acknowledges no restraints, who dares whatsoever his caprice and wanton petulance may suggest.”
 - ii. Harold Hoehner says, “It is the performance of blatant acts with no consideration of personal standards or social sanctions. It is doing something openly with no shame.”
 - iii. Notice that they “have given themselves over” to this lifestyle. This means they had handed themselves over to their lustful desires. “It was their own initiative which propelled them in to immorality.” (Hoehner)
 - b. Uncleaness = uncleaness in a moral sense, impurity. Note the word ‘all’. They pursue moral uncleaness in all its forms, every kind of uncleaness. Often moral uncleaness is connected to physical uncleaness. Immorality is dirty not just spiritually, but physically.
 - c. Greediness = means a “greedy desire to have more; covetousness, extreme selfishness”. The picture is of one who has sold himself to the gratification of sinful lusts and yet is never satisfied, he just wants more and more. Without the intervention of God through the work of salvation, “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” (2 Tim. 3:13)
3. Note: The **key point** is that we are not to pattern our lives as believers after the wisdom and lifestyle of the world. The unsaved

In Christ - Ephesians Series

world is not our model and example for life. Our standards for living are to be based on the eternal Word of God.

II. THE PROCESS FOR THE NEW LIFE (VS. 20-24)

The Apostle now reminds the saints of the “put off”, “put on” principle they had been taught for their Christian lives. The picture Paul uses is that of a removal of an old set of clothes to replace it with a new set. In essence, he says, “Christian, wear your new outfit!” There are **four aspects** to this process for living the new life. We are instructed to:

A. Remember (Vs. 20-21)

1. You came to know Christ’s Person (Vs. 20)
 - a. “but ye” = the believers in contrast to the lost just described.
 - b. “learned Christ” = they had come to know Christ personally through salvation. Christianity is Christ! Notice that it doesn’t say “learned about Christ”. Many people know “about” Christ but have never entered into a personal relationship with Him through salvation.
2. You came to know Christ’s Principle (Vs. 21)
 - a. “If...you have heard him” = ‘if’ is used in the sense of “since you have heard”. Paul is reminding them of what they had already been taught previously as he had not been present in Ephesus for 5 or 6 years.
 - b. “heard him...taught by him...truth in Jesus” = the truth came from Christ as He is the very embodiment of truth (John 14:6). Though the truth was delivered through gifted men, it ultimately had Christ as its source.
 - c. Note: It is our relationship to Christ that is the motivating power behind our new conduct.

B. Remove (Vs. 22)

1. “put off” = means to lay aside, to remove as one puts off clothes. The word was used in Acts 7:58 to describe the “laying down” of the clothes at Paul’s feet by the mob that stoned godly Stephen to death.
2. “the former conversation” = the previous lifestyle.
3. “the old man” = the description of the person you used to be before salvation. The “old man” is “the unsaved person dominated by the totally depraved nature” (Wuest).
 - a. The old man is further described as being “corrupt according to the deceitful lusts”. The word ‘corrupt’ means “rotten, putrid”. It is in the present, passive participle tense and therefore speaks of “the progressive condition of corruption which characterized the old man.” (Wuest) The former self was “not only corrupt but growing ever more and more corrupt.” (Linguistic Key)
 - b. Positionally, we have been delivered from the new man (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20) but Paul is now exhorting us to a practical living out of that reality in the power of God. The liberating truth for the Christian is that you don’t have to live anymore according to the dictates of the old man!
4. For the Christian it isn’t “business as usual” but “under new management!”

In Christ - Ephesians Series

5. Illustration: Lazarus – take of the graveclothes of the old life (“Loose him, and let him go.” John 11:44)

C. Renew (Vs. 23)

1. ‘renewed’ = means to “make new again”.
2. “spirit of your mind” = The mind is the control center of the whole person. Before salvation our behavior was conducted according to a mind dominated by darkness and vanity (Vs. 17-18). Many of our problems in the Christian walk trace back to wrong thinking. The mind needs to be renewed by the truth of God’s Word.
 - a. Col. 3:10 “And have put on the new *man*, which is **renewed in knowledge** after the image of him that created him:”
 - b. Romans 12:2 “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”
 - c. “You will only be a strong Christian if you are a truth loving Christian.” (Ironsides)
3. This verse demonstrates the key role the mind plays in this process of change. Between the “putting off” of Vs. 22 and the “putting on” of Vs. 24, we have “be renewed” in Vs. 23. The old thought patterns need to be replaced with new thought patterns that are based on the truth. God desires that we have truth in the “inward parts” (Psalm 51:6).

D. Replace (Vs. 24)

1. “put on” = the principle of replacement. We are not only to remove the wrong things out of our lives, we are to replace them with the right things.
2. “the new man” = the brand-new man! Refers “to the saved person dominated by the divine nature” (Wuest). Refers to who we are now in Christ as described in the first part of the Epistle. Again, Paul is emphasizing the practical outworking of our position. “Christlike Christians display the life and loveliness of the Lord Jesus.” (Phillips)
3. “created in righteousness and true holiness” = what a contrast to the old man which was described as being “corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Vs. 22) The word ‘created’ points to the supernatural work of God in our salvation. We are His new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

III. THE PRACTICE OF THE NEW LIFE (VS. 25-27)

The Apostle now moves from the general principle to demonstrate what this looks like practically in our everyday lives from Vs. 25-32. This section will be the focus of our next lesson but to make a start, let’s consider two areas addresses. As New Men in Christ we are to have:

A. A New Talk (Vs. 25)

1. The negative – “putting away lying”.
 - a. Lying is Satan’s lingo (John 8:44). Warren Wiersbe: “Whenever we speak truth, the Spirit of God works, but whenever we tell a lie, Satan goes to work.” John Phillips: “Lies are the evil one’s currency of speech.”

In Christ - Ephesians Series

- b. Illustration: The first sin judged in the early church was lying (Acts 5:1-11).
2. The positive – “speak truth”.
3. The reason – “for we are members one of another”. We have union with one another by virtue of our union with Christ our Head. We are joined together in a spiritual body.
 - a. Interestingly the word ‘members’ is “never used of members of an organization but always members of an organism. Members of an organization may not have a relationship to other members but members of an organism demand a close-knit relationship to the other members.” (Hoehner)
 - b. The sin of one member affects the whole. Remember Achan’s sin and its impact upon the whole nation of Israel (e.g., defeat at Ai).
 - c. Romans 12:5 “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members of one of another.”

B. A New Temper (Vs. 26-27)

1. “Be angry” = Anger is not intrinsically sinful. God exercises righteous wrath and anger against the wicked (Psalm 7:11; Rom. 1:18). There is nothing wrong with being angry for a righteous cause. In fact, anger would be the only appropriate response to some things. Anger can be an emotion connected to a right sense of justice.
2. “sin not” = we are forbidden from exercising sinful anger. As weak, sinful creatures our anger is rarely selfless and righteous. Even the right sort of anger can quickly become sinful if we are not Spirit-controlled.
3. ‘wrath’ = ‘parorismos’ “means anger that is mingled with irritation, exasperation, and embitterment.” (Wuest) It is an “intensified form of the word ‘wrath’”. It describes a state of being intensely provoked. It is a festering anger, provocation or irritation.” (Hoehner) Someone has described anger as “momentary insanity.”
4. Illustration: I explode and then its all over. Yes, and look at the damage left behind that explosion!
5. “not the sun go down upon your wrath” = important we keep short accounts with one another and with the Lord and settle our anger quickly. As one put it, “The day of anger should be the day of reconciliation.”
6. “give place” = ‘place is from the Greek word ‘topos’ which forms the basis of our word ‘topography’. Unresolved, sinful anger gives Satan an opportunity to establish a base of operations in my life.
7. Rather than giving place to the devil, we need to give place to the Lord to deal with the injustices in our lives. Romans 12:19 “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* **give place** unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

Conclusion: What is influencing your walk as a Christian? Are you walking according to the new position you have in Christ or according to the dictates of the old life? Are you allowing God’s truth to renew and transform your thinking?