

Eph Ch 4 Vs17-24

You have not so learned Christ

Last week we finished out vs 14-16 concerning the fact that we need to be growing more and more Christ-like, in a consistent on going manner in every area of our lives. That we no longer be children in understanding, but that we study to show ourselves approved, workmen that need not be ashamed, being those people who rightly divide the word of truth. So that we won't be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, your discernment being sharpened because you know the word of God. That's how you grow in your discernment, by knowing the word of God; there is no spiritual gift of discernment. So if someone claims to have the gift of discernment, then they're reading a different bible than you have, because according to my bible, that gift doesn't exist.

Now there is a gift of discerning of spirits, but there's no gift of discernment, discernment is available to every believer, and it comes through knowing the word of God. Heb 4:12 tells us that, "*the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" If you want to be able to discern right from wrong, truth from the lie, then get to know the word of God, if you lack discernment, then you really have no one to blame but yourself because right here (in this book) is where you gain it and we all have the equal access to it.

God desires that we be unified in the balance of His word, and in the application of His word. So that we might edify and build up one another, that we might serve one another, and communicate with one another in truth and in love, that we might grow up in *all* things into Him who is the head Christ. Working with one another, cooperating with one another, being willing to forgive one another if you somehow feel wronged, so that there's effective working; every part, or each one doing their share. Because that's how we grow, as we interact with one another, ministering to each other through the various giftings that Christ has measured out to us, you might call it cross-pollination, you might call it iron sharpening iron, or you may simply refer to it as body life, but the point is, is that as we all are faithful in doing what God has called us to do, the end result will be that of being equipped for the work of the ministry, and the edification of the body of Christ, which results in growth, and that's what we want. We want to grow, we want to emulate Jesus, more and more to the world around us, and so it's important that we no longer walk as the rest of the world walks, and that's what we're going to talk about this morning. Because even though there is tremendous grace in Christ, we're not to be using that grace as a cloak, or a covering, for sin.

You remember last week that I was speaking to you in regards to some of the false doctrines that are out there and that have blown through the church world, and one of the things that I brought up to you was that of sinless perfection, that you can be perfect in this tent, (in the respect of sinless) and that's simply not true, nor is it scriptural, and the only way that you can make it scriptural is by twisting the scriptures.

However, don't miss-understand me, I by no means have any desire to justify your flesh *or* excuse your sin. You know, this whole, I'm not perfect just forgiven state of mind, though don't get me wrong, there is an element of truth to that, but how easily we can grab a hold of those types of things and use them as a cop out for a lack of godly discipline in our lives, or in order to somehow justify our sin. You see; there's a big difference between liberty, and license, do we have liberty in Christ? Absolutely, but not a liberty *to* sin, it's a liberty or freedom, *from* sin; the grace of God is to liberate us from sin, not license us to sin.

That's where Paul is headed now, that as believers not only are we to walk in unity, but in holiness as well, not by works of righteousness that we do, because we can't do any works of righteousness, but by allowing God to have His way in us. You see, when you and I were born again, we became a new creation, 2 Cor 5:17 *"if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* It's not that you simply *receive* something new, but you become something new, you are given a new nature, and this new nature isn't simply thrown on top of, or added to your old one, but rather it replaces it. Here's the deal, a changed nature demands a changed behavior, because we behave according to our nature, Rom 8:5 *"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."*

So it's impossible that you can have a new nature and yet still live as though Christ has never come into your life. You see, if you are all the time consumed with the things of the world and your mind is on fleshy things, then you have reason to be worried and there should be yellow lights flashing in regards to that in your heart, because if you are living according to the Spirit of God, then the things of God and His word, and how you can be pleasing to Him, and what would you have me do are the things that will be consuming your mind. Now I'm not saying that if you've ever thought how nice it would be to be at the lake, that you've blown life, but what is it that is the master passion of your life. How is it that you're leading your life, do people know that you're a Christian because of the way you live, or do you call yourself a Christian, but other than that know one would ever know the difference?

Vs17

Now you remember that the 1st 3 ch in this book are doctrinal, the last 3 ch's are practical, ch's 1-3 are the foundation, ch's 4-6 are the application. So based upon all that is ours and that we have been given in Christ and all of the heavenly resources that we have to draw from. Paul is in essence saying this is where the rubber begins to hit the road. He says this I say therefore, in light of the things that I just shared with you, this is how you are to respond, God has done all this for you, now respond in this way. Because you've been called to salvation, unified in the body of Christ, gifted by the Holy Spirit, and built up and equipped for ministry by gifted men; don't walk, or progress through life like you did before you came to know Jesus. As the rest of the gentiles walk, the word "gentiles" here represent all of which are ungodly, unregenerate, non-believing, pagan persons.

You remember that in vs 1 of Ch 4, Paul exhorted us to walk worthy of the calling with which we were called. and 1st of All that means to live in loving unity, empowered by the Holy Spirit, with our brothers and sisters in Christ, but now (it would seem) as though he begins to get down into the nitty gritty aspect of our everyday lives, in regards to our walk, or our lives led as believers and how we're to be representing ourselves. Because in reality how you represent yourself is how you represent Christ, Jesus said that you are the light of the world. Yet we read in John's gospel that in Him (that is Jesus) was life and that life was the light of men, in John 8:12 where Jesus spoke, saying, "*I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.*"

So how is it then that you as a Christian are the light of the world if in reality Jesus is the light of the world? Simple, it's Jesus in you, that is the light of the world, Because He is light and in Him is no darkness at all. and So if we're going to be the light of the world, if Jesus is going to be reflected accurately in our lives, then there are some things that need no be apart of our lives, and that's what Paul is dealing with here. He says this I say, therefore and testify in the Lord, in other words even though it's coming from his mouth, this isn't just his opinion; his testimony is *in the Lord*. In other words this is God's word that he is giving to us, and he's making that clear by letting you know that his testimony, or witness of this truth is in the Lord. When Paul wanted to share his opinion he makes sure to let you know that it's his opinion. and You can read of that in 1st Cor ch 7 but even in his opinion he let's you know that, "*yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy.*" But what we're reading here isn't Paul's opinion, this is the unquestionable word of God, his testimony is *in the Lord*.

What is it that the Lord has to say concerning redeemed lives? That they are to be different from the lives led by people that don't even know Him. There should be changes that have taken place and are continuing to take place that distinguish your life from what it once was, and cause you to be set apart from a life of worldliness like everyone else leads who doesn't know Christ. #1 You should be thinking differently, and you should be understanding things differently, in new "light". You should be seeing things differently, interacting with people differently and have a sensitivity to the things of the Spirit that you never had before, this passage addresses all of these things.

You see we were at one point of the world, but now having come to Christ, though you're still in the world, Jesus said you're not of the world, for He has called you out of the world. They are dead in trespasses and sins; you've been made alive in Christ. Therefore you should no longer lead your life like the unsaved non-believing people in our society. Because 1st of all they walk in the futility of their minds, their thinking is futile, and that word "futility" speaks of being void of useful aim or goal, it speaks of being devoid of truth. So there's a lot of mental activity going on but there's a vital element missing; truth. This word also speaks of thinking that characterized by perverseness, or depravity. Their minds are corrupt, now understand that we speak of words like these in regards to people who don't know Jesus Christ (Words like we see in this passage, futile thinking, ignorance, blinded) There is in no way an insinuation that people who don't know Christ are somehow lacking intellectually, because that's just simply not true. Worldly people are capable of great intellectual accomplishments; the vast, vast majority no doubt much more so than myself. But as one man put it, it's that they're creating "improved means to unimproved ends."

In other words there's absolutely no real value to any of it when it comes to the eternal. That which truly matters, it may make this life a little easier, it's an improved means, but eternally speaking it did absolutely nothing for anyone, unimproved ends. They walk in the futility of their minds, why is it that their thinking is so vain, so futile, notice vs 18, because their understanding is darkened. It's cloudy or unclear, they're unable to grasp and ascertain spiritual realities, the bible speaks of those people who are always learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth, their understanding is darkened, therefore their thoughts are futile; let's correlate this to the 1st ch of Romans. I read this to you Wednesday evening, but let's turn there together and look at it together this morning. Let's look at vs 21-23, Vs 22.

Foolishness is all that's displayed by the individual that rejects the message of the reality of God that God has put in His creation and suppresses it and holds it down in unrighteousness as vs 18 speaks of and they choose to believe in some big bang theory or that there is no God, Ps 14:1 says that "*The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, They have done abominable works.*" (finish reading through vs 25) how futile, or darkened in understanding can you be? Now look down and vs 28. 2 Cor 4:4 in regards to the understanding being darkened, "*whose minds the god of this age (speaking of Satan) has blinded, (or darkened) who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*"

So as one rejects God they become futile in their thoughts and their understanding is darkened, but the remedy for that condition is as simple as belief, that one would believe on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, then the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, would shine upon them. That's God commissioned Paul to open the eyes of the gentiles, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, Acts 26:18. Because they are alienated (vs 18 of ch 4) from the life of God, cut off from the life of God, which is the only true life, God alone innately and intrinsically or inherently has life.

Now all of mankind has existence, but life; the fullness of what we were intended to walk in, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, insight and understanding, purpose and the resources of heaven, that's life, and God alone possesses that and issues that through His Son. and We started out in our old life apart from that, you could boil all of our problems down to one issue, we were alienated from the life of God. and The same is true today for anyone who doesn't know Jesus Christ all of the hopelessness, all of the emptiness, the vanity and futility that exists in their lives (or maybe I should say in their existence) is because they are alienated from the life of God. Why, read on, because of the ignorance that is in them, again not intellectual nincompoops, unable to accomplish tasks that involve the use of the intellect.

But again because they are devoid of the truth, they lack divine or spiritual knowledge, what's this telling us? That truth and life, are coupled together (hmmm, where have I heard that before?) If you believe God's truth, you receive God's life; people are alienated from the life of God, because they are destitute of the truth of God. Or in Short, they don't know Jesus, they don't abide in Christ, they've never received Him personally into their lives and into their heart's. John 14:6 Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*"

Truth and life go together; therefore if you're void of God's truth, you are alienated from the life of God. and Why is it that they are ignorant concerning the things of God, look again, it's because of the blindness or another translation would be because of the hardness, of their hearts. In other words they are resistant to the things and truth's of God, they're not really open to learning of God, and sin in a persons life will have this type of a petrifying effect. The heart of a person who continually chooses to sin, being unopened to the truth of God, becomes hardened and paralyzed to spiritual truth, and utterly insensitive to the things of God. Or as vs 19 puts it, they're past feeling, in other words they become calloused, apathetic, and indifferent concerning moral and spiritual things due to layer upon layer of resistance to God. Their conscience becomes seared, they're no longer sensitive concerning any sort of godly standard and so they (Vs19) give themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. Because they're past feeling, and have become spiritually calloused, they give themselves over to lewdness, or maybe your bible says sensuality or lasciviousness or licentiousness. We're talking here about the absence of all moral restraint; the idea is that of unbridled self-indulgence and undisciplined obscenity.

2 Peter 2:10-13 speaks of people like this, *“who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions.”*

They've given themselves over to lewdness to work all uncleanness with greediness. Or a continual lust for more, or to put it another way, people in the world who are in this futile, darkened, ignorant, blind and calloused position get to where they actually crave spiritual impurity. The more that they resist what is right and pure and true and good, the more they crave to indulge themselves in just the opposite, casting off all restraint, performing all kinds of impurity and lusting for more. But the reality is that sensuality doesn't satisfy, it tries to promise you that it can, but it's a lie, it's deceit, the fact of the matter is, is that it doesn't satisfy, it only creates a bigger appetite for more. and They call evil good and good evil, but the bible says in Isa 5:20 *“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”* But such is the case with the reprobate mind and calloused heart, vs 17-19 is a withering description of the downward spiral of the non-believer.

Vs20

Underline that vs in your bible, the Christian cannot pattern himself after the unsaved person. Why, because the believer has experienced the miracle of salvation, of being raised (literally in the spiritual sense) from the dead. His life is no longer futile, but purposeful, his mind and understanding aren't darkened, but rather filled with the light of the word of God. His heart isn't hard or calloused, but it's sensitive to the things of the Spirit, has no desire to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and he's not alienated from the life of God but rather filled with all the fullness of God's life.

The Christian doesn't give themselves over to sin for the satisfaction of their own selfish lusts, but he gives his body to God as an instrument of righteousness. Before you were in Christ you were dead to God and alive to sin but in Christ the bible tells us that we're to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore (Romans tells us,) do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. You have not so learned Christ. Notice that he didn't say you have not so learned *about* Christ, why? Because it's possible to learn all about Christ and yet still never be saved, there's a lot of people that know a lot about Christ, can quote scriptures all day, and may even be a Greek or Hebrew scholar and yet their still not saved. To learn Christ is to have a personal relationship with Him so that you're growing in knowing Him, getting to know Him better (and the aim is) each day. You can learn a lot about Abraham Lincoln if you want to, read many of the things he said, secure books about his life.

But you can never learn him because he's dead. But Jesus Christ is alive so I can continually and consistently learn Christ, through personal fellowship and communion with Him.

Vs20-21

If you've truly met the Lord and are hearing Him, Jesus said My sheep hear my voice, and if we are learning Him, being taught by Him or disciplined by Him, which means we are following Him. The call to discipleship is come follow Me, discipleship is following Him. and If we're being taught by Him, as we're in His word and in fellowship with Him through prayer, a new life will be being continually developed in us, why, because the truth is in Him, you see here in vs 21 as the truth is in Jesus. In other words you won't be learning that type of (vs 17-19) lifestyle if you're being disciplined by Jesus, because truth is in Him, meaning truth will be in you as well, therefore you can't lead the same old lifestyle of deceit and lies.

1 John 2:3-4 says, *“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. (In other words we’re obedient to those things that He is teaching us.) He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and (listen) the truth is not in him.”* Why, because if the truth was in him, his life would be reflecting the Lord, not the heathen. Because His truth is impacting us and influencing us, and changing us and freeing us from those old lies and the old life, what did Jesus say? In John 8:31-32 we read these words of Jesus, *“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* and In vs 36, *“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”* The truth is in Jesus 1 John 5:20 *“And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”* Truth liberates, sets you free from bondage, and error and deceit, what is it that Jesus teaches, well many things, but as it relates to this text.

Vs22-24

That you put off concerning your former conduct, those things that we spent the majority of our time talking about, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. Again in Christ you’re not to let sin reign in your mortal body, Rom 6:14, *“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”* and Notice here the contrast, the new nature is in truth (vs 21) in contrast to the old nature, which is full of deceitful lusts. Of which we’re to put off, our old man was crucified with Christ, so quit wearing him around, put him off, and put on the new man, the new nature, reckon the old man dead, renounce any present conduct that was formerly associated with that old man and the old way of living and abide in the newness of life through Jesus Christ Now, these aren’t human works required for salvation, but inherent elements of the divine work of salvation in our lives. Basically what Paul is describing here is repentance from sin and submission to God.

Vs23

This is speaking of a continual renewing, though there is an initial renewing that takes place at salvation, even still we need to be continually renewed in the spirit of our mind. Rom 12:2 *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”* Rom 8:6 *“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”* and Finally, 1 Peter 1:13 *“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* Be renewed in the Spirit of your mind.

It's not just out with the old, but Lord bring in a new way to think and a new way of life, be renewed in the Spirit of your mind, God wants to give you a new *heavenly* mindset. There's all kinds of frames of mind and maybe we'll hit that briefly next week, but know that God wants to give you not only a new heart, but also a new mind, the mind of Christ. So God would have us allow the Holy Spirit to have His way in our lives, that we would put off the old corrupted man.

Vs24

Again in contrast to the old man which is characterized by deceitful lusts, the new man is characterized in true righteousness and holiness. These are the characteristics of the person who has truly learned Christ, and this is where we'll pick up next week.