

Title: Off with the Old, On with the New

Passage: Ephesians 4:17-24

Context:

Ephesians 4:1

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to *walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,*

Passage: Ephesians 4:17-24

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Introduction:

Illustration in “A Gentle Thunder” - Max Lucado

- Question: Is a gentleman born or made?
- Two sons in a kingdom searching for the answer. One found a walking cat and thought found evidence one can be made. But another heard and brought mice where it's true nature came out. A walking cat is still a cat
- One can train and change external behavior and look but ultimately cannot change what is irresistible.
- Our true nature (sinful nature apart from God's grace) will always appear.
- Changing outwardly doesn't change within. Outside is not enough. One must be born again from within.

Jesus conversation with Nicodemus

John 3:3

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

- one must be born from above to have eternal life.

John 2:24-25 (man's sinful nature)

But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

John 3:5-8 (Response to Nicodemus' questioning)

Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Ezekiel 36:25-27

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

- prophecy made 600+ years before Jesus conversation with Nicodemus

Overview: Three Questions

- I. What is our heart's condition apart from new birth?
- II. What is the escape that God provides from this futility?
- III. What is my part that God requires of me?

I. WHAT IS OUR HEART'S CONDITION APART FROM GOD'S MERCY AND GRACE?

Ephesians 4:17-19

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

- Recall Paul's earlier description of life before Christ:

Ephesians 2:1-3

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Romans 1 (progression of culture that continually rejects God)

Romans 1:21 (culture choosing sin over God)

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:24-25 (God gave them over to choices made)

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Romans 1:26 (God gave them over to the passions chosen)

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;

Romans 1:28 (God gave them over to the sinful minds)

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

- Do not be ignorant of the sinful life/condition/heart that we were before/apart from Christ. Otherwise, we will persistently choose sin instead of God
- We must look deeply within ourselves to properly see the cause of our futility in changing our sinful heart.
- No human effort or plans can deal with the sinful heart without failure.

II. WHAT IS THE ESCAPE THAT GOD PROVIDES FROM THIS FUTILITY?

Ephesians 4:20-22

But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus.

John 5:39-40 (Jesus admonishment to Pharisees)

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

- Pharisees incorrectly thought external study and more information about the Bible was enough. Incorrectly thought actions and study alone brought salvation
- Instead: you learn and know the Person of Jesus. “Knowledge” is not merely information but depth of relationship like husband/wife.

1. Hearing

- hearing Jesus’ voice. His calling of you.

John 10:27-28

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

Romans 10:17

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

2. Taught in Him

John 16:8

And when he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

Awakening of our hearts by the Spirit of God (moment in time)

- regeneration
 - changed state from death to life

John 11:43-44

When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Enlightening (process)

- sanctification
 - process of learning to walk and be more like Jesus. Spiritual growth in maturity (from baby to increasing growth)

Truth in Jesus

John 8:31-32

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

III. WHAT IS MY PART THAT GOD REQUIRES OF ME?

Ephesians 4:22-24

to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, *created* after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Comparison of verses

Verse 22 / Verse 24

Put Off / Put on

Old Self / New Self

Corrupted / Created

Your former life / Likeness of God

Sinful desires / Righteousness and holiness

Based on deceit / Based on truth

Creation

Key word: "Created"

- God is the one who sovereignly *creates*

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Question: What is our role and response?

Answer: Put off your old self...Put on new self

- act in accordance to your new nature

- The moral choices we make have lasting implications. In Christ, the source of our choice has been made new and we can discern what is right and what is wrong.

Philippians 2:12-13

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

- One-time: present your bodies On-going process: living sacrifice
- Stop: being conformed to this world Instead: Be transformed by renewal of mind through God's Word.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.