

"Renewed in the Spirit Of Your Mind"

Ephesians 4:20-25

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by C.W. Powell

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“20 But ye have not so learned Christ; 21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. 25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.”

We are called to grow up, to not be children anymore, tossed around by every wind of doctrine or the craft of gamblers and dicers and such as use arts to deceive—lying in wait along the path, waiting to turn us aside from the path of truth and righteousness.

Paul has now come to specifics on what it means to live a Christian life in the fellowship of the saints and under the ministry of the Word of God. There is a change that has come and must come into their lives because of the work of the Spirit of God, that great power that works in those who believe, the “exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.”

This gift of the Spirit and the working of this mighty power is the promise of the Spirit that was promised to the people of God when Messiah came. He would pour out His spirit upon all flesh, and there would be a length, and width, and depth, and height to the working of the Spirit and the knowledge of Christ that is essentially absent in the

Old Testament, but only seen dimly through promise.

The testimony of God through the apostle Paul was that there is to be a radical difference between the mind and the walk of those who belong to Christ. “Don’t walk as the OTHER gentiles walk.” Empty minded. They run this way and that way, chasing this empty dream and that empty dream, because they are out of touch with reality, and cannot think straight. They may be very skilled in what they do, like a ships pilot that is very skilled in navigation and seamanship, but hasn’t the slightest idea of where the ship is to go

Their understanding is darkened by the judgment of God: Alienated from God: They are ignorant because of blindness. This is a culpable ignorance. Sin has gripped the soul and blinded the heart, so that they will not see. ‘Ye will not come to me that you might have life’ Jesus said. “If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness.” This blindness is a hardness, a deadness toward God and holiness.

They are past feeling” No shame, no remorse, no sensibility of the awfulness of what they think and do. They cannot blush, they are outrageous in their conduct and glory in it, mocking the godly. They work at their wickedness, they have given themselves to it, to work all sorts of uncleanness with greediness.

But let us look at the words in our text.

Vs. 20-21: But you have not so learned Christ. “If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:” (Eph 4:21)

Ungodliness and wicked lust come from somewhere else, not from Christ. Not from liberty in Christ; not from the Holy Spirit; not from the Triune God. Not from Jesus of Nazareth. The minds that have been enlightened as to the truth of God, the Lord Jesus, and the body of Christ tend another direction, for we have been taught

of God to love both Christ and our neighbor, as our catechism states it:

Q86: Since, then, we are redeemed from our misery by grace through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we do good works?

A86: Because Christ, having redeemed us by His blood, also renews us by His Holy Spirit after His own image, that with our whole life we show ourselves thankful to God for His blessing, and that He be glorified through us; then also, that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by the fruits thereof; and by our godly walk may win others also to Christ.

Q87: Can they, then, be saved who do not turn to God from their unthankful, impenitent life?

A87: By no means, for, as Scripture says, no unchaste person, idolater, adulterer, thief, covetous man, drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ is made to us “wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.” We are not alienated from God, but know Him and are in fellowship with Him: This does not mean we are without sin, but it means that we walk in light, in truth, confession, and acknowledgement. If your idea of Christ has not transformed your life, and is not presently transforming your life, then you have a bad idea of Christ, and you need to go back to the school of Christ and learn His ways more perfectly.

Vs. 22 “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”

A. “Former Conversation” means the whole way of life. The Christian life involves a radical change of life. The figure of speech is a whole change of clothing. Nothing of the old costume is kept; all is to be laid aside.

B. The “old man” is everything you got from you father and mother when you were born into this world. There is nothing of the natural seed that is worthy in God’s eyes. You must be born again to enter into the kingdom of God, and having entered into the kingdom of God, it is necessary that you dress accordingly. “You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” You have been made alive in Christ, now put off the garments of death.

Rom. 13:12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

Eph 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

1Th 5:5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

C. The old man is corrupt: wasted away. 1Co 3:17: If any man **defile** the temple of God, him shall God **destroy**; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

D. How is the old man corrupt and wasted completely away: by the deceitful lusts.

1. Lust are desires;
2. Deceitful: they promise what they cannot give: happiness.
3. Desires are addictive; the more they are satisfied, the more they demand.
4. You are not to have your life controlled by your own desires. Romans 15:

“1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.” (Ro 15:1-3)

This is Psalm 69. Christ came with zeal for the church, not for himself.

5. How radical: the strong are to serve the weak; not the weak serve the strong. This is the total opposite of how the natural man looks at things. From the playground in kindergarten the strong bully the weak, but this is not the mind of Christ.

Vs. 23: “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”

A. Not just the mind; but the spirit of the mind.

1. The spirit is the bent, the direction, the attitude of the soul.

2. Sometimes spirit is the same as mind, in the sense of contrast with the body. There are only two entities that make up the man: body and soul; or body and spirit. The spirit is the inner man that cannot be seen, but uses the body.

3. Sometimes the spirit is contrasted with the soul: in this case it means the attitude or the direction of the soul or mind: happy spirit means a happy soul. Various spirits can direct the soul: rebellious, happy, cheerful; hopeful; depressed; gloomy; unbelieving; faithful, angry, forgiving; hard, implacable. Especially, the soul can be dominated by a “lying” spirit: deception of itself and others.

4. The flesh directs the soul in godless ways of darkness, as we read in Galatians 5:

“19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Ga 5:19-21)

5. But a different spirit is to direct the soul to righteousness and holiness: Galatians 5:

“22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” (Ga 5:22-23)

6. Paul uses a different figure in Galatians 5, but it means the same as put off and put on:

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” (Ga 5:24)

The figure is harsher, much harsher, but the effect is the same. Put off, means to crucify, to put to death. If you are a Christian you have begun to do this in coming in faith to Christ and His cross. As Paul says in Romans 8:

“8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man

have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. 10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” (Ro 8:8-10)

B. When you came to Christ you begin to live in the Spirit and you were raised from your deadness into life in Christ; Go with that: Live in the Spirit and not according to the deceitful lusts. You will have this war your whole life: whether to serve yourself or whether to serve the Lord Jesus by serving His people. It involves a putting off and self-denial; a crucifixion. If you don't think this is hard, just visit the homes of those who have small children; see the wars that children have to get their own way, to get and keep this particular toy or piece of a toy.

C. Mothers and fathers work very hard to civilize their children, so that their deceitful lusts do not destroy everything around them, and they succeed in a remarkable way, so that our desires recede and hide themselves even deeper in our psyches; but we will struggle our whole life, wanting to have our own way, seeking our own way, manipulating and destroying in order to get our own way.

Vs. 24, 25: “24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. 25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.”

A. This renewing of the spirit of the mind necessarily means to a change behavior, the result of a new creation of God. Old things pass away, and all things become new:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2Co 5:17) B. This creation of God is in righteousness and true holiness—not the holiness of ceremony, which was the

excellence of Israel.

The holiness of the heart and soul, not just outward form.

1. Holiness has to do with our duty toward God
2. Righteousness has to do with our behavior toward men.
3. Truth can modify both words: it means genuineness, not show.

C. That's why we have the "Wherefore" in verse 25. This genuineness in the spirit of the mind. A lying spirit is most contrary to Christianity, and we are all affected with it apart from Christ; for He alone is truth.

D. Put away lying. We are members one of another. If you lie to one another, your lie will disrupt the body.

1. Lying is like a drug and disrupts communication in the body.
2. Evil communications corrupt good manners: lies cause us to behave in bad ways. If someone lies about someone to you, it will cause you behave in a bad way toward that person.
3. I suspect that you all have been at one time or another victimized by somebody's lies.
4. We must call ourselves to repentance and ministers are required to call people to repentance on these things. There is no one who is not culpable, but none of us gets a pass on this. The scripture is very clear:

"16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17 A proud look, a lying

tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.” (Pr 6:16-19)

5. These things are lumped together, because they all go together, for they character the deceitful lusts of the old man that are abomination to God:

a. Pride: Lies proceed from pride: a restructuring of reality. The liar would make things different from what they are; to protect himself and his pride: either to deny that he did something he doesn't want to admit to, or to take credit for something that he didn't do.

b. Lying tongue: proceeds from pride as I said.

c. Hand that shed innocent blood; the innocent are blamed for what they didn't do, or are denied credit for what they did do. Much blood has been shed on the earth because of the lying tongue; and even more hatred has been generated because of the lying tongue.

d. Heart that devises wicked things; pride causes hatred which then thinks of evil to do to the person that is the object of hatred.

e. Feet swift to mischief. This pride and hatred can be very energetic in the performance of mischief. We are sometimes more faithful to our cause if the cause is evil than we are to a cause that is just. People are far more apt to spread evil rumor about someone, than they are to give praise where it is due. It is just more fun to be a talebearer of evil things.

f. False witness. Giving testimony against someone.

g. Sowing discord: this is the end result of the pride that rules our hearts. That's why the Lord said, "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom." (Pr 13:10) Two ways this can be read in the Hebrew: that pride is the only root of contention; or contention is the only fruit of pride. The former seems to be more suitable to the context of Scripture, but the meaning is essentially the same: that where there is pride there is contention; and where there is contention, there is pride. The Lord hates the whole mess, for it is all ugly and destructive.

Application: I have made them during my remarks today. Amen and Amen.

God bless you.