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**C0505 -- Feb. 02, 2005 – Ephesians 4:20-24 – The New Man**

Let's review last week, Eph 4:17-19, "The Old Man". Here Paul, turns from Walking in Unity, verses 1-16 to Walking in Holiness in verses 17-32. First Paul, cognizant that he was writing Scripture here, exhorts us to **walk no longer as the Gentiles walk**. Paul then gives five characteristics of the **Old Man's Nature** starting in v. 17 and concluding at the end of v. 18. When we reverse the order we find the cause-effect relationship Paul is stressing in the Greek text. Because of the hardness of our hearts we were willfully ignorant. Because we were willfully ignorant we were excluded from the life of God. Because we were excluded from the life of God we were darkened in our understanding. Because we were darkened in our understanding we walked in the futility of our mind. This is the downward spiral of the **old man**, what some call the **old sin nature**. Verse 19 gives us the lifestyle of the **Old Man**. The lifestyle that naturally grows out of the old man is one of **callousness**, insensitivity toward God. He therefore gives himself over to **indecent**. These are blatant public acts that have no respect for the sanctity of human life or morality. He also **practices every kind of impurity**. This word has to do with sexual impurity. He makes sex into a business adventure and he does so with **greediness**. This means that he wants more of whatever he lusts after without regard to the needs of others. He is extremely self-centered. And this is the natural outgrowth of the sin nature. As you can see the **old man** is an abominable thing. It is what all men inherit from Adam and we are condemned because of it (Rom 5:12).

Today we are going to turn to the other side. We've looked at the **old man**, today we are going to look at the **new man**. These are contrasted in v. 22 and 24. We looked at the nature and lifestyle of the old man. Today we'll look at the nature of the new man and next week at the lifestyle of the new man that naturally grows out of the new man.

- B. WALKING IN HOLINESS (4:17-32)**
  - 1. The Old Man (4:17-19)**
    - a. His nature (4:17-18)**

- b. His lifestyle (4:19)
- 2. The New Man (4:20-32)
  - a. His nature (4:20-24)
  - b. His lifestyle (4:25-32)

(1) The Statement of the Teaching (4:20-21)

*Greek Text 4:20 umeis de ouk outos emathete ton Christon,*  
**Translation 4:20 But you have not learned Christ this way,**

*umeis de ouk outos emathete ton Christon, “But you have not learned Christ this way,”.* **But** marks the contrast with the old man of 4:17-19. Now John wants to turn to the new man of 4:20-32. He says **you** Ephesians **have not learned Christ this way**. That is, the conduct of the Gentiles is not what the Ephesians learned regarding Christ. They had learned a very different conduct. The structure of the Greek **learned Christ** is unique to the NT. Nowhere else are we ever told to “learn a person”. We are often told to learn from a person, like Christ or God (Matt 11:29; John 6:45), we are told to learn doctrine (Rom 16:17), learn a lesson (1 Tim 2:11), and learn about things (Phil. 4:11), but we are nowhere else told to “learn a person”. But that is clearly what Paul has in mind. We are to **learn Christ**.

What does it mean to **learn Christ**? How is **learning Christ** different from learning doctrine *about* Christ? The main difference is that learning about Christ may become a mere factual exercise. Paul is saying this is insufficient. Factual learning *about* Christ is not a sufficient type of learning in biblical Christianity. We must learn Christ personally. We are coming to know a person not a historical relic. Christ is a living person. Too often, scholars and theologians approach the study of Christ impersonally. We study the details of every word, the case of nouns, the voice, mood, and tense of verbs and the syntax of the sentence. It’s a very technical exercise. This is not wrong by any means, in fact it is necessary, but it must be kept in mind that the ultimate goal of our learning is to come to know Christ personally. Therefore, learning Christ is not the cold assimilation of facts about Him. It is the warmth of developing a personal relationship with Him.

The aorist tense of *manthano* (**learn**) points to the time of our conversion, the moment we believed in Christ. This was the beginning point of our **learning Christ** personally. We came to know Him as our personal Savior at the moment of our salvation, we should develop to know Him as our personal Lord as Paul declares in the following verses. This logically follows from Paul’s emphasis on the *resurrection* and *ascension* in Ephesians

(1:20-21; 2:5-6). If Christ were crucified and never rose from the dead then it would be enough to learn the facts about the person of Christ (such is the case with the world's major religions and philosophies). We can simply learn facts about the religious leaders Moses, Buddha, Mohammed and the philosophers Plato, Aristotle, and Kant. But we can never come to know them as persons. Moses' body was buried and did not rise. Buddha died as any other man, and so did Mohammed. Indeed, as Dr. Wilbur Smith says, "All the millions and millions of Jews, Buddhists, and Mohammedans agree that their founders have never come up out of the dust of the earth in resurrection." What then gives these religions moral impetus? If no one is really watching us then why act as if there were? Moral acts become acts of self-deception. But since Christ did rise from the dead and since He is alive and well at the right hand of the Father then we can come to know Him personally and we are living under His ever watchful eye. Our lives should be pleasing in His sight. Only Christianity has true moral impetus because only Christianity asserts that its founder is alive and watching. If there is no resurrection of Christ then there is no reason to live godly lives because He is not watching, He is dead. So, we live godly lives now precisely because He is living and watches every moment of our lives and human history (1 Cor 15:12-22). This is why the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is essential to Christianity. You can't have your cozy morality and reject the resurrection. Either accept all of Christianity or reject it all but don't play these games where you take parts of Christianity as true for you and reject other parts. It just won't cut it.

*Greek Text 4:21 ei ge auton ekousate kai en auto edidaxthete, kathos estin aletheia en to Iesou,*

**Translation 4:21 surely you heard about Him and were taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,**

*ei ge auton ekousate kai en auto edidaxthete*, "**surely you heard Him and were taught in Him**". The NASB translates this **if indeed** but the Ephesians **surely** had **heard Him**. Thrall suggests that the *ei ge* construction means "if you have heard...as I know you have." Paul uses this construction as a recall device. He's using it to recall the 2 ¼ years he was in Ephesus teaching them for 5-6 hours a day in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10). **Surely** they had **heard** Christ. They had not heard Christ directly, but they had heard Christ through the apostle Paul (2:17). Apostles were divine messengers of Christ. So, they did hear Christ. The aorist (of *akouo*) points to their conversion. They had **surely heard about** Christ at their conversion and subsequently through many hours of Paul's lectures. Paul's intention here is to remind them of what they **had heard and were taught** previously. It had been 5-6 years since he had taught them, but **surely** they remembered hearing Christ through the apostle Paul. This is how they came to **learn Christ** personally, through

hearing Christ and being **taught in** Christ. Christ is both the object of our learning and the sphere of our learning. We are able to learn Christ because we are connected to Christ. The ultimate goal is to **learn Christ**; to develop an intimate personal relationship with Him. As gifted people minister to one another in the church it helps others come to **learn Christ** in salvation. Subsequently they can **learn Christ** in sanctification to the building up of the Church.

*kathos estin aletheia en to Iesou, “just as truth is in Jesus,”*. **truth** (*aletheia*) refers to reality in contrast to falsehood. **Jesus** is the embodiment of **truth**. It is because **Jesus** is the embodiment of **truth** that we can **learn Him**. He is truth. The mention of the name **Jesus** in connection with **truth** roots God and truth in history. **God** and **truth** are not in the beyond somewhere. They came to planet earth. Christ’s perfect life in history demonstrates how practical **truth** is. **Truth** is always practical. You can never get too much **truth**.

## (2) What They Were Taught (4:22-24)

### (a) Putting Off the Old Man (4:22)

*Greek Text 4:22 apothesthai umas kata ten proteran anastrophen ton palaion anthropon ton phtheiromenon kata tas epithumias tes apates,*

**Translation 4:22 that you have laid aside the old man according to the former lifestyle who is being corrupted in accordance with the desires coming from deceit,**

Paul had taught the Ephesians that the **old man** had been **laid aside**. The primary teaching is to the corporate Church. The Church is no longer a part of the Gentiles. The NASB is way off here in translating this verse. The translators made the three infinitives in vv. 22, 23, and 24 commands. Although this is possible grammatically it is clearly not true here. Paul always gives injunctions before giving commands and the commands do not begin until v. 25. So, Paul is not commanding us to **lay aside the old man**. Paul is stating that the **old man has already been laid aside**.

*apothesthai umas, “that you have laid aside.”* The infinitive *apothesthai* means to “take off a garment” (e.g. Acts 7:58). The metaphor of the “garment” in this context is the **old man**. Paul taught believers that they have already taken off the **old man** at conversion. This is an aorist tense, action that took place in the past without regard to its duration. Paul is simply re-counting what he taught the Ephesians while he was with them for 2 ¼ years. What Paul taught in Ephesus was that **the old man** had been **laid aside at conversion**. This fits with Rom 6:6 and Col. 3:9 [both aorist].

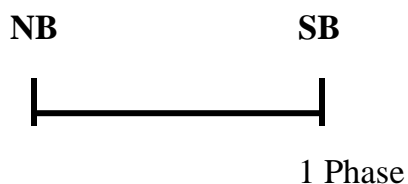
**Romans 6:6** knowing this, that our old self [man] was crucified [aorist] with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be ineffective [done away with], so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;

Before our old man was crucified with Christ we were slaves to sin. Slaves! In other words our bodies were our masters and our bodies were sinful. This means we were slaves to sin. Now our old man (Adam) has been crucified with Christ so that the body of sin is now *ineffective*. We do not have to sin any longer. Chafer said this means we are free from the power of sin. Whereas before we had to sin, we had no power against it, now we do not have to sin any longer. We are free from the power of sin. Now we have volitional capacity, the ability not to sin. Before our old man was crucified we were free only to do sin but we were not free to do righteousness. The **old man** had to be crucified and we had to be given a **new man** in order to be free to do righteousness. Notice that this verse does not command us to crucify our **old man**. It has already been done in the past [aorist].

This is the area of “Old Man/New Man Theology”. This is very important stuff. You have to understand the “Old Man” and the “New Man”. This used to be called the Old Nature and the New Nature. Technically speaking the Bible never says Old Nature and New Nature (Gk. *phusis*). But I don’t really have any problems with the terminology. Before conversion you had only one nature or man, he was Adamic. Now since conversion you have two full natures or men: 1) the Nature of Adam and 2) the Nature of Christ. As a believer you have both natures.

But notice verse 22. Verse 22 says that **the old man has been laid aside**. “How can you say that we have both an Old Adamic Nature and Christ’s New Nature when the Bible says that our old man has been laid aside at conversion? Which is it? Do we have one nature or two natures?” It’s both. It depends on whose perspective you’re looking from. From God’s perspective you have only one Nature, Christ’s. God sees you as complete in Christ. He’s sees the finished product. He sees us at the moment of conversion as completed beings. That’s what 22a is talking about.

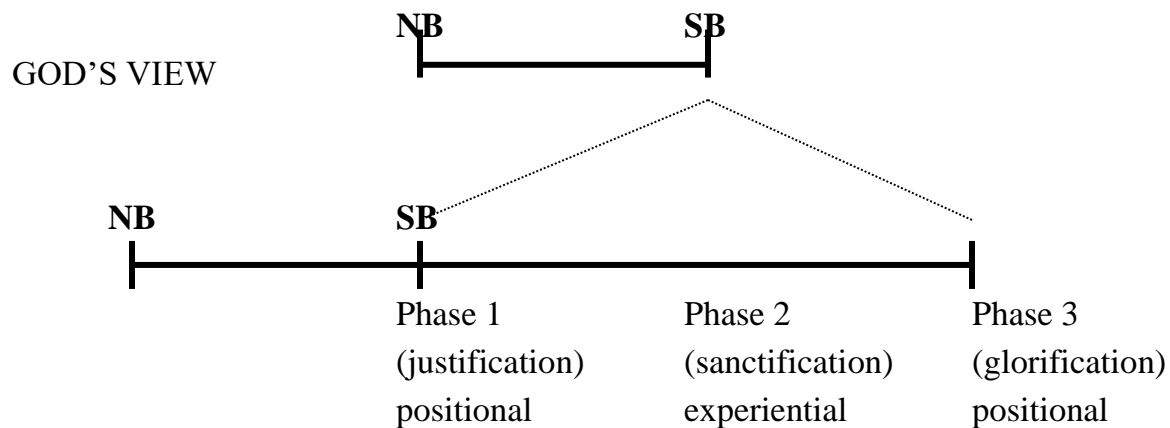
#### HOW GOD SEES US AND SALVATION



NB = Natural Birth (in Adam)  
SB = Spiritual Birth (in Christ)

From God's perspective you are either saved or unsaved. You are either in Adam or in Christ. God only sees the **new man**. God's focus is on the positional truth. From our perspective things appear differently but we must learn to see ourselves as God sees us.

### HOW WE SEE OURSELVES AND SALVATION



The 1 Phase that God sees splits into 3 phases from our perspective. We have been saved (justification), we are being saved (sanctification) and we shall be saved (glorification). But God is looking at the 3 phases of salvation as if they were one. God looks at us as either saved or not saved. We are either in Adam or in Christ from His perspective, positionally. He sees us as already complete at Phase 3!

From God's perspective the **old man** has already been **laid aside** at the moment of salvation. Paul is giving us positional truth here. Positionally, our **old man has been laid aside**. But experientially the **old man** is still there. Paul slides back and forth between positional and experiential truth in his letters. In fact he does this in this verse. Verse 22, the last phrase is a present infinitive which says our **old man...is being corrupted in accordance with the desires of deceit**. Now, how can our **old man** already **have been laid aside** and yet also be undergoing **corruption**? Because our **old man** has been laid aside positionally, but experientially our **old man** is still around, still being corrupted.

Paul often speaks positionally from God's perspective. For example, a radical example is given in 1 Cor 1:2. Speaking to the church in Corinth Paul said "*to those who have been sanctified*" ([perfect tense] 1 Cor 1:2). How could the carnal Corinthians already be

sanctified? From God's perspective they are complete. If this is true; if God already sees us as sanctified then this should be a motivation toward walking in holiness, toward walking in a manner worthy of the calling with which we were called (Eph 4:1). God's perspective of you is that you are a new creation (**2 Cor 5:17**). From the divine perspective we are totally new creations. No mix between the old and new creation but a totally new creation. This verse is positional truth again. Paul wants us to think in terms of positional truth. Who am I in Christ? Sure, we know our experience is wrought with troubles. Sure, we are cognizant of our **old man** and his sinful lifestyle, but it is emphatically true that we do not have to live according to that **old man** anymore. That **old man** has been crucified. Sin no longer has power over us (Rom 6:6). Now we have the volitional capacity to live according to the **new man** (v. 24). We have been freed *from* sin and free *to* righteousness. Paul is reminding the Ephesians of this teaching. We ought to consider ourselves as God considers us, as having laid aside the old man and our old lifestyle at the point of our salvation. This ought to be motivation to live according to the new man that has a new lifestyle of holiness. This is who we really are in Christ. You are not that old creature but a new creation. Now live that way.

*kata ten proteran anastrophen ton palaion anthropon*, “**the old man according to the former lifestyle**”. Positionally, believers have laid aside the old man. The **old man** always conducts itself in terms of the **former lifestyle**. Since the **old man** has been laid aside then the **former lifestyle** has also been laid aside. The **old man** only produces the things Paul mentioned in v. 19 of this chapter. He cannot live the new lifestyle. This phrase is therefore showing that the **old man** is integrally connected to the old lifestyle just as the **new man** is integrally connected to the new lifestyle. This is why Paul says that the **old man** always walks **according to the former lifestyle**. Paul's logic is that since the **old man was laid aside** at the moment of salvation then we should no longer live **according to our former lifestyle**. We have put on the new man who produces only **righteousness** and **holiness** (v. 24).

*ton phtheiromenon kata tas epithumias tes apates*, “**who is being corrupted in accordance with the desires coming from deceit**,”. Notice we have not gotten rid of our **old man** experientially because here Paul says that our **old man...is being corrupted** presently. This is a present infinitive. The **old man** is continually being **corrupted**. It cannot avoid **corruption**. Last week I showed you the **old man** and the downward spiral of corruption (4:17-19). We still have that **old man** experientially and he always operates in **accordance with the desires coming from deceit**. It is passive in voice indicating that the **old man** is being acted upon by some other force. That force is described next as **the**

**desires that come from deceit. The desires that come from deception** constantly corrupt the **old man**. This is why we are commanded to avoid deception (Jas 1:16).

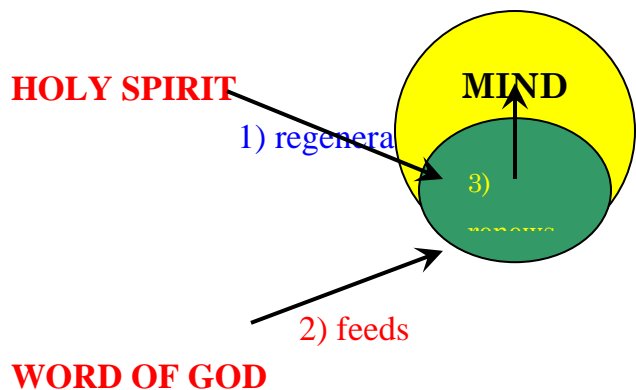
**(b) Putting On the New Man (4:23)**

Verse 23 seems to fall out of the logical sequence. We would expect v. 23 to be the last of the three steps. Instead he puts it second. The logical sequence would be: 1) having put off the old man at conversion and 2) having put on the new man at conversion we should 3) continually be renewed by the spirit in our mind. But Paul sandwiches the renewal of our mind in between the laying aside of the old and putting on of the new man.

*Greek Text 4:23 ananeousthai de to pneumati tou noos umon*

**Translation 4:23 but you are being renewed by the spirit in your mind**

Again, verse 23 is not a command. This is a present infinitive and should be translated **you are being renewed** rather than **be renewed**. The commands do not begin until v. 25. This is an ongoing renewal that happens **in our mind**. **The spirit** here is most probably the human **spirit** and not the Holy Spirit. The **human spirit** is located **in the mind**. The origin of the human **spirit** is God (Job 27:3; 33:4; 34:14). God gives the spirit to a person and the spirit returns to God when the person dies (Eccl 12:7).<sup>i</sup> Unbelievers have a human **spirit** but it is dead to the things of God. It merely functions to animate the body (1 Cor 2:12-15; James 2:26). At the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit is the active agent that regenerates the human **spirit**. He quickens the human **spirit** to make it alive so it is sensitive to spiritual things (Eph 2:5). Then the **human spirit** becomes the agent that continually renews the **mind**. The word of God provides the nourishment to the human **spirit** so the human **spirit** can renew the human mind.



The regenerate **human spirit** feeds on God's word. We have the volitional capacity to choose to take in Bible doctrine or not. If our minds are to be renewed then we must nourish



our **human spirits** with Bible doctrine. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom 10:17). So, positive volition toward the word of God is central to the renewing of our **mind** (Rom 12:2; 1 Pt 1:13). Without it the **mind** is deceived and led astray (2 Cor 11:3).

*Greek Text 4:24 kai endusasthai ton kainon anthropon ton kata theon ktisthenta en dikaiosune kai osioteti tes aletheias.*

**Translation 4:24 and that you have put on the new man who has been created after God's likeness in righteousness and holiness that comes from truth.**

*kai endusasthai ton kainon anthropon*, “**and that you have put on the new man**”. Once again, verse 24 is not a command. You are not being commanded to **put on the new man**. **You** already **have put on the new man** at the moment of conversion [aorist tense]. The commands will begin next week in v. 25. The word **put on** is from the Greek word meaning “to put on a garment” (cf. Matt 6:25; 22:11; **27:31**). It is an opposite of the word in v. 22 which meant to “lay aside your garment”.<sup>ii</sup> So, the picture is of changing clothes. You laid aside the old clothes and you put on the new clothes. Metaphorically speaking, you laid aside the old dirty man and put on the new clean man at conversion. Who is this **new man**? I think it is both the individual and the corporate church. The church is certainly a **new man** (2:15) but the individuals that make up the church are also **new men** (4:24). The primary teaching here is probably a reference to the whole church as a **new man** as signified by the plural pronouns. Nevertheless, there is individual application since individual growth is essential to body growth.

*ton kata theon ktisthenta*, “**who has been created after God's likeness**”. The new man **has been created after God's likeness**. The word **created** is *ktizo* and refers to what God creates in the physical and spiritual realm. Here it refers strictly to the spiritual realm. God created the **new man** and we received the **new man** at our conversion.

Adam was originally created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-28). What Adam lost in the fall was regained by Christ. What Christ regained was a new creation made in **God's likeness**. Interestingly, the Bible never says that the **old man** was created by God. God originally created man without sin. Therefore, the **old man** was acquired when man fell and lost that original state. The **new man has been created after God's likeness**. Those who are in Christ are described as “*new creatures*” in 2 Cor 5:17.

*en dikaiosune kai osioteti*, “**in righteousness and holiness.**” The words **righteousness and holiness** describe the sphere that we have been created in. We now dwell in

**righteousness and holiness.** Therefore our conduct ought to reflect **righteousness and holiness.** **Righteous** conduct refers to conduct that reflects the righteousness of God. God's righteousness means that His character is the standard for right and wrong. When we conduct ourselves in righteousness our character reflects His character. We dwell in and operate according to the standard of His character. **Holiness** is used only twice in the NT (here and Luke 1:75). It is always used in conjunction with **righteousness.** There is not a lot of difference between **righteousness** and **holiness.** If anything can be said it is that **holiness** refers to "piety, devotedness, or reverence" for God. The **new man created in God's likeness** reflects the **righteousness and holiness** of God.

*tes aletheias*, "that comes from truth". The **righteousness** and **holiness** of our conduct stems from the truth. They find their source in truth. **truth** is opposite of **deceit** at the end of v. 22. So, the **new man** is diametrically opposed to the **old man.** The **old man** has an old lifestyle of sin; the **new man** has a new lifestyle of **righteousness and holiness.**

It is because the **old man** was laid aside at our conversion and our **new man** was put on at conversion that we should daily renew our minds by filling our human spirits with Bible doctrine. In all this we should not lose sight of the fact that the context here is the corporate church and only secondly the individual. Paul's focus is on unity. As a corporate body the universal church is to realize that the **old man** was done away with and the **new man** has come. As a corporate body we should be characterized by **righteousness and holiness.** Knowing that God sees us as positionally a **new man** should stimulate us to jump start our volition into experiencing freedom from the power of sin. We have been set free from sin and freed unto righteousness. To God be the glory. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> All human spirits return to God, the giver of the spirit. They all return for judgment. If believers they return for the judgment seat of Christ, if unbelievers for eternal judgment of damnation. But all spirits must return to God for final judgment.

<sup>ii</sup> The exact opposite of *enduo* is *ekduo* as exemplified perfectly in Matt 27:31.

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