

**Ephesians 4: 20-22; “Putting Off the Old Man”, Message # 34 in a series entitled – “The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, A Bible Study prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall, for November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

In verses 17-20 Paul told the Ephesian believers that learning Christ meant their no longer walking as the rest of the Gentiles walked. In other words, they should not live their life in sensuality and lewdness. They should not walk in the futility of their minds. He said that this futility, this living life to no spiritual purpose, not being pleasing to God, comes from ignorance of His word in your mind, and not responding to it rightly. It comes from blindness of heart, and a person giving themselves over to sins of the flesh; thinking that life consists in such vain things.

Well, here in these verses, we see that every Christian has a responsibility to begin, and to continue to do, certain things in relation to living the Christian life. I want to talk to you about the first two of the three things that are listed here. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – I want to explain to you what it means to hear Christ and to be taught by Him. And 2<sup>nd</sup> – I want to begin to explain to you what it means to put off the Old Man which grows corrupt. So, let’s consider these truths together now, and try to understand better what God is looking for, from us, in living our life for Him.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – The Christian has the responsibility to hear Christ and to be taught by Him.**  
(verses 20 and 21)

“But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus...” Interesting wording, is it not? It does not say, “if indeed you have heard about the Lord Jesus”; but it says, “if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him”. In other words, to “hear Christ” is to have learned Christ. And you can know that you know Christ when you can spiritually hear His word. Hearing Christ is not simply thinking about information that you have heard about the Lord Jesus from someone; a teacher of the word, or someone who is sharing Biblical truth with you. That is not what gives you this personal ability to hear Him. It is the Holy Spirit’s working in your heart which gives you this ability to hear Him. Jesus once said – He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Now, this is not an audible voice that you hear. It is Christ’s voice speaking to you through and by means of His word in your heart and mind by the power of the Holy Spirit. Turn with me over to John 5: 24-30. “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death in to life.” “Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.” “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.”

“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” “I can of Myself do nothing.” “As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.” Now, perhaps you do not understand that Jesus is here speaking of two types of resurrection. The first one that He mentions is spiritual resurrection. How do we know this? It is because of the wording of verses 24 and 25. In verse 24, Jesus says that whoever hears His word and believes in Him who sent Him has (present tense) everlasting life. That person who believes in Him will not come into judgment but has passed from death into life.

He is talking about being converted to Himself; becoming His disciple and follower because He has given you life. Now you have this hearing heart. In verse 25, Jesus says that the hour is coming and now is, when those who are dead, that is spiritually dead, will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. He cannot be talking about physical resurrection because this verse follows just after what He has said in verse 24 in which He plainly states the matter – when you

believe in Jesus you have this spiritual life in yourself. He says that we should not marvel over this; His blessed work of giving us life and the ability to “hear” His voice. He goes on to talk about another kind of resurrection, His raising the dead physically in verse 28, when He says that the hour is coming (that is sometime in the future, at the time when He returns) when all in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

So we learn here that there will be two very different physical resurrections on the same day, even at the same hour. All people will hear His voice on that day, but not all will be saved. A great number shall be condemned forever to condemnation and go away to eternal punishment because they did not want to believe in the Lord Jesus. You see the reason for this over in verses 37-40. “And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me.” “You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.” “But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.” “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” “But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have eternal life.”

That is, they never came to saving faith in Jesus. Even though they had heard the Scriptures many times, they never heard His voice speaking spiritually to their hearts in and through the Scriptures because they were unwilling to come to Him, when He personally came to them, preaching His word to them, having been sent by the Father to preach the gospel to them. Now, this is the way that it is with all people by nature before they are saved. But I want to show you that this matter of hearing Jesus’ voice is something that all of His disciples, all true believers need to see the importance of, as they walk with Him day by day on the path of righteousness. Christ Himself is really teaching you spiritual truth in your mind and heart. And not all Christian progress at the same rate in their hearing. Turn with me over to John chapter 13, verses 31-38.

“So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him.’ “If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.” “Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer.” “You will seek Me; and as I said the the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you.” “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” “Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord where are you going?’ “Jesus answered him, ‘Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.’ “Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, why can I not follow You now?’ “I will lay down my life for Your sake.” “Jesus answered him, ‘Will you lay down your life for My sake?’ “Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.”

Now, let us ask ourselves, how is Jesus going to be glorified immediately in God, at that point? It would be by His going to the cross and dying for our sins. Where He was going, heaven, after He finished the work of redemption, they could not come, not yet. And it is very interesting here, that Jesus says right at this point – A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Jesus said this because they needed to especially hear it at this time. It was a time when they were most confused about the future, greatly troubled about not be able to follow Jesus to the place that He was going; that is, to the cross, and beyond that, to heaven itself. Jesus wanted to teach them how to love one another, even when they were troubled.

Peter, right away, mentions his own loyalty to Christ. He mentions his own determination to follow the Lord, even if it meant laying down his life for Him. He questions why he could not follow Christ at that point. Jesus had just said that Peter would follow Him afterward, but Jesus knew that Peter was not “hearing” His voice at this point, as of yet. He was hearing Jesus, but He was not hearing Him spiritually, in relation to what Jesus knew that he was really like; how strong the thoughts of His Old Man were. And so He plainly tells Peter that the rooster will not crow till he had denied Him three times. Now, I want you to see the connection between what Jesus said to all the disciples, a moment before, about loving one another even as Christ was loving them at that point; and that, in relation to His going to the cross. We need to understand that as we read the Scriptures,

that we too, as Christians are going to have many things to learn from our Lord, in relation to what we want to do for Him. But loving one another as we are learning these things is the most important thing, Jesus is saying.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – Each of us has a responsibility to put off the Old Man which grows corrupt.**

Verse 21b and 22 – “As the truth is in Jesus; that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the Old Man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” We have just seen, in my first point to you, that Peter’s holding his to own self-determination and his own evaluation of his own abilities, was the very thing that led to his denying his Lord. Even though Jesus told him of this danger, we know that he held to this all the way through the time that Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane praying, all the way through the time when Jesus was being apprehended and being betrayed by Judas and the temple guard, and all the way into the courtyard of the high priest; where, when he was confronted by a servant girl, about his being one of Christ’s disciples, he denied Him.

When we learn, as a Christian, that the truth is in Jesus, and we believe this truth and are saved, we still have much to learn about putting off the Old Man. What is the Old Man? The Old Man is the person that you once were before you came to faith in Christ. It is the person that you were, with wrong thoughts and conclusions about God and Christ, and the way that you think you can glorify Him. As a Christian, the Old Man is still there in you, but he is dethroned from your life, by Christ’s grace. He cannot rule your life any longer, but he will still keep bringing up to your mind, at times, thoughts that are not in accordance with God’s way of humbly being taught the truth.

When you believe in Christ, there is a very real sense in which you have died to your former life. Look at Galatians 2, verses 17-20 with me. “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin?” “Certainly not!” “For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.” “For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.” “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

There are some things which we need to take notice of here. Verse 22 of Ephesians 4 is saying that since you have been crucified with Christ, you have put off the Old Man who grows corrupt according to the deceitful lust. This means, that if the Old Man is growing corrupt, he is not completely dead yet, because there is still a part of your fallen corrupt nature (the flesh) that remains after conversion to Christ. And so, you have the responsibility as one who is saved, one who is forgiven, to put this Old Man off. What does it mean to put him off? It means that when you are tempted to live the way that you once lived, in sin, in any way, that you put off those sinful thoughts. You do not let them try to come back to rule over your thinking, as they once might have, or did. They may still try to cling to you like the cloak that you used to wear, but now you have new clothes which have been given to you by Christ, and you put them on you by the Holy Spirit. You clothe yourself with Christ.

But you should understand that the fleshly thoughts of the Old Man will still try to continue on with you. This is only because you have to learn the new and better way. You have all the blessings of salvation. You have the robe of righteousness and the garments of salvation. You have the Holy Spirit with you. You have been girded with the truth. But these things you must consciously put on, even though they are yours. The old sinful thoughts must not reign over you any more. But it is even more than this. It means that you will not trust in the strength of your own determination, and in your own self-evaluation, to do things for Christ that you think will help forward His cause either. You will rest in His word that He will be with you to teach you in accordance with His word. You will pray, and you will listen for Christ’s voice to you, speaking to you through His word. This is what Peter failed to do at certain points, and it was the reason that he ended up denying His Lord. Each of us needs to be careful that we do not do the same thing. Peter was a true Christian, but he had much

to learn in this regard. There were some things that he failed to do, to put off the Old Man, when it came to his wanting to help the Lord Jesus and defend Him. Peter truly want to help the Lord Jesus.

Turn with me to Matthew chapter 26, verses 36-41. "Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, 'Sit here while I go and pray over there.'" "And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed." "Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.'" "Stay here and watch with Me." "He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed saying, 'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will but as you will.'" "Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'What!'" "Could you not watch with Me one hour?" "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

So, you can see how unable Peter and any of the disciples were, to be able to support the Lord in the time of His greatest agony, because even though they truly loved Him and wanted to help, they did not watch and pray. This was because they did not put off the Old Man. In just the same way we will sleep at crucial times in the life of our church, and not be able to do anything to help anyone, if we do not watch and pray. The spirit, our spirit is willing, but the flesh, that Old Man who grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, does not have the spiritual strength to do what is right on occasions in which other Christians need us the most.

Turn over to John 18, verses 7-11 and we will see yet another way in which Peter did not put off the Old Man. "The Jesus asked them again, 'Whom are you seeking?'" "And they said 'Jesus of Nazareth.'" "Jesus answered, 'I have told you that I am He.'" "Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way, that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, 'Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none.'" "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear." "The servant's name was Malchus." "So Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword into the sheath.'" "Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?" Notice how wonderfully the Lord Jesus was teaching Peter how to put on the New Man; how to love others when He Himself was being wrongly being taken away as a criminal.

Now, this gentle rebuke which Jesus gave to Peter was not given by Jesus in order to tell us that we should not defend our love ones from being taken from us during times of unjust governmental actions. What it is warning us of, is against fleshly thinking and action, such as Peter took here, to try to keep His Master from having to be arrested, when Jesus had already told Peter that He was going to have to go to the cross. Peter, as Jesus told him earlier in Matthew 16: 23, was not minding the things of God, but rather only the things of men. We need to take heed to ourselves that this not be the case with any of us, either.

It should be a warning to us against our thinking that we should take matters into our own hands to violently accomplish earthly justice when we know that at times we, or others we love, will have to suffer for our faith. Again, this is not to say that defense of Christians or loved ones is wrong. But earthly selfish carnal means to accomplish that end are not right in God's sight. You can see now, I trust, why Jesus gave His disciples the New Commandment just before He went to the cross.

Cross-bearing and love to the brethren went hand-in-hand with Jesus. He knew that they had much to learn. And having learned it, He wanted them to be patient, kind, and loving even when personally, things were most difficult; even when they were suffering for righteousness sake. He wants this to be the case with us as well. We should be able to receive the idea that when we are receiving the greatest opposition from wicked men, or even great opposition from righteous men, that we can demonstrate the love of Christ to them at that very time. Let us remember that each Christian has many things to learn in what it will mean to put off the Old Man and put on the New. I will have much more to say about the New Man in my next message to you.