

Ephesians 4:17-24

“New Life, New Lifestyle”

Who here understands the statement, “*In the world, not of the world*”? It’s the distinction that Jesus was making when He said, “*If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*”¹ The idea being though we’re *in* this world physically, we’re not *of* this world spiritually, we’ve been born again as by the Spirit of God. Our citizenship isn’t of this world, our home is in heaven, where Christ is. We’re just pilgrims & strangers, passing through... Now of course we’re to be the *light* of the world, but the whole point is that *your life* is markedly different than the lives of those who are *in the world & of the world*.

To the Corinthians Paul put it like this, he said, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*”² Now guys, follow me here. If in Christ you’re a new creation... & old things have passed away... & *all things* have become new, that points to a polar shift in regard to everything about me, yes? Everything I used to be about (be it my attitude, worldview, looking out for #1, making a name for myself, or whatever) that’s all gone... *All things* have become new. Or to understand it another way; a new Life necessarily *demand*s a new *lifestyle*.

Yet it blows my mind (perhaps yours as well) how many people seem to think that they can have *new* Life, w/out having a new *Lifestyle*. (Now when we speak of “lifestyle” we’re talking [again] about attitudes, values, worldviews, patterns of social relations, the way I entertain myself or present myself to others, the whole thing).

& That’s the emphasis behind this section of scripture that we’re studying today. Paul is moving from our relationship to the church; to our relationship to the world. From walking in unity, to walking in purity. Now let’s not forget that all this revolves around what it means to “walk worthy” (Vs 1) of the calling w/which we’ve been called. He’s spoken of maintaining unity, of actively using the gifts of the Spirit to bless & build up the body, but how are we to order our lives in society?

Vs 17-24

So the Christian’s way of life is comprised of both positives & negatives. Meaning, that to the positive here’s what we *are* to do (lead lives of humility, gentleness, bearing w/one another in love, we’re to *minister* to one another, aiding in the *maturity* of one another...

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 15:18-19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (2 Co 5:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We're to speak the truth in love, every one of us doing our share leading to the growth & edification of the body.) Those are the basic things Paul has focused on so far. Now he starts in on the negative.

He says, "This I say, therefore (in light of this worthy walk) & testify in the Lord..." What does that mean? It means this isn't just Paul's opinion. He's not saying, "I think it would be wise, or probably a good idea if you followed my instructions here, it just makes sense." No... He's saying, "This is the word of the Lord for His church." He's testifying "in the Lord, that you should no longer walk (or lead a lifestyle) as the rest of the Gentiles walk (or lead *their* lifestyles), in the futility of their minds..."

Let's not forget that the Ephesian church was a Gentile church. Meaning, ethnically speaking, they weren't Jews. They didn't have access to writings of scripture (they hadn't previously known of the 10 commandments; or had any concept of the law/prophets). They were pagans that had been drawn out of darkness, out idolatry & into the light of salvation by grace through faith in the Person of J.C. who has loved us & given Himself for us. That's why Paul says, "Don't be living like the rest of the Gentiles..." The point being that when Christ takes up residence in your heart, He changes your life & not really in a subtle way, but in a *radical* way...

You used to have mindset that was futile, but now you've been given the mind of Christ. Ladies & Gentlemen, that changes everything. You don't think like you used to think, you don't believe like you used to believe & as we've noted along the way, our belief determines our behavior. The way we *think* determines how we live.

& I just want you to see that here. Paul points to the problem in the life of the unbeliever; it's the futility of their *mind*. Listen to me, the war is for your heart, but the battle takes place in the *mind*.

But Paul says that we're no longer to walk as the unsaved, unbeliever walks (or lives). The world is walking one way, you & me, we're going the other way. Listen, that's what *repentance* is, it's a change of *mind* leading to a change of *direction*. You used to be going one way, which resulted in a certain lifestyle. Then, when you received Christ, your mindset changed, resulting in you *now* going a different way, leading a *different* lifestyle. & When we put the pieces together here we see that the unbeliever is walking the wrong way because they don't know the truth (Vs 21) therefore they've never received the life (Vs 18). Only Jesus (who is the *way* we go, the truth & the life Jn 14:6) can meet their spiritual needs.

It's tragic how often the church seems to grope for the acceptance of the world & want to be seen as "cool" to the world when in reality rather than seeking to be *like* the world we should be offering something much better *to* the world than a lame replica of what they'd already done. *People in this world are empty, hurting... they're in a shell that gives them the appearance of having it all together when in truth they're w/out hope being w/out God in the world. & You have the answer for them, you have that which will give them hope, purpose, & everlasting life... Don't seek to imitate the world, you should no longer walk as the rest of the world walks. They're dead in trespasses & in sins, you're alive to God in Christ Jesus!*

They're walking about in the "futility of their minds..." What does that mean? The word speaks of vanity, or emptiness. You might think of a mirage. Picture a man wandering aimlessly in the desert. There he is, on the verge of death. His mind deceives him causing him to believe that he sees a mirage- an oasis of water, of shade, of life. He pursues it... but the closer he gets the farther off it seems until he dies.

*Mankind is born dead in sin, our minds deceive us into thinking we can find meaning & purpose apart from God, but we're chasing a mirage, fulfillment is always just out of reach. Maybe satisfaction will be found in *this* sin, or *that* achievement, but it's futility...*

The unsaved individual's thinking is futile, why? (Vs 18) Their understanding is darkened. The unsaved may think he's enlightened because he's rejected the bible & gives credence to the latest philosophies & theories of psychology, but in reality, he's in the dark.

*& No one is saying that the unsaved are incapable of incredible intellectual achievements. As one has put it, "We have improved means to unimproved ends." Paul told the Romans (in writing of man's rejection of God), **"...although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools,"**³ He told the Corinthians, **"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, 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."**⁴*

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ro 1:21-22]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Co 4:3-4]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Notice, it's not just that the eyes of the unsaved are blind so that they can't see, but their minds (their understanding) is darkened so that they can't think clearly on spiritual matters. But once you reject the light of God's word, what's left other than darkness...?

"Being alienated (separated) from the life of God", & again (just to point it out) we read in Vs 21 that the truth is in Jesus, truth & life go together. If you believe God's truth, then you receive God's life. But the unbeliever is alienated from the life of God, "because of the ignorance that is in them (not intellectually but spiritually), because of the blindness of their heart."

You see... It may start in the mind, but it always boils down to the heart. & The blindness of the heart will evidence itself in the belief & the behavior of man.

You'd think that the unbeliever would do his utmost to get out of such a terrible spiritual plight. But the hardness of his heart enslaves him. Did you see that in Vs 19? He is (the words are) "past feeling". **He's so entrenched in sin that it doesn't even phase him, there's no real spiritual sensitivity. "Past feeling" carries the idea of being calloused. No longer sensitive to pain, anesthetized, numb, moral insensibility. Someone defined it, "the deadness that supervenes when the heart has ceased to be sensible to the stimuli of the conscience" (Ellicott).**

One responsibility of the Holy Spirit (we find in Jn 16:8) is to bring "conviction". To prick the conscience making us aware of our sin, of our lack of righteousness & the coming judgment. & Let's be honest, though we're grateful for it, it doesn't feel good. It can be painful, it hurts our heart. Now God's desire when a person experiences conviction is that they stop sinning & turn to Him. **But the more a person experiences conviction & chooses to ignore it & reject it, the harder (more calloused) their heart becomes. Eventually they don't feel the pain of that sin any longer. Of course that doesn't necessarily mean that the Holy Spirit isn't seeking to convict them, it just means that they're... "past feeling".**

So they give themselves over to lewdness (licentiousness) (the idea is to throw off all moral restraint). Most people try to hide their sin. This person has no shame, shock of public opinion is irrelevant so long as he can gratify his desires... "To work all uncleanness w/greediness." That is, they'll practice every kind of impurity, w/a continual lust for more. Self-gratification w/no regard for others... It's a dark picture of depravity (people's selfish, sinful & perverted ways).

Now; if Vs 20 is not highlighted, underlined or circled in your bible, make it so.

Vs 20-24

Listen, everyone else may be doing these things & acting this way. But you (personal accountability, personal responsibility) you have not so learned Christ! & Don't miss what's not there! He didn't say, "You've not so learned about Christ." To learn *about* Christ isn't what we need! You can learn all about Christ & never be saved! Lots of people know lots of things about Jesus & aren't saved.

But to learn Christ implies relationship. Hey, you can learn "about" any historical figure you like by reading & studying. I can learn "about" Abe Lincoln, but I can never truly learn *him* because I can't *know* him, he's dead. I can only learn a person who's alive, w/whom I can communicate & have fellowship with. Christ is alive, & what's being unveiled to us is the fact that to learn Him is to *put off* the old way of living & to *put on* the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness & holiness.

& Again let me draw your attention to the importance of your mind & growing in the knowledge of Him. This section of scripture uses words like, "mind, understanding, ignorance, learned, heard Him, taught *by* Him, the *truth* is *in* Him.

How is it that we're renewed in the spirit of our mind? Through fellowship w/Christ that's based in the word of God. The entire bible is a revelation of J.C. (Heb 10:7) "In the volume of the book it is written of Me." The whole bible points *to*, revolves *around* & speaks *of* J.C. So the better I know the Word of God, the better I'll know the Son of God.

& We notice in Vs 21 that Jesus is the subject & the sphere of a believers learning. We've heard Him, been taught *by* Him as the truth is *in* Jesus. In John's Gospel Jesus said that like this, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*"⁵

& Learning Christ, growing *in* Christ, following *after* Christ looks like what? (Vs 22) That we "put off", concerning our former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts... Again, to the negative this is what we *put off*, like taking off old dirty clothes.

Think of Jesus calling Lazarus forth from the grave. In that grave his body was putrefying, decomposing, it smelled of death. But when Jesus called him out of death & into life what did He say? "Loose Him" (remove those old grave clothes) "& let him go."

He no longer belonged to the dominion of death, he was alive. The grave clothes were no longer appropriate, he needed to put on something different, something that reflected life (not death).

⁵ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [In 10:27]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

That's what Paul is saying here. You no longer belong to the old corruption of sin; you belong to the new creation in Christ. Put off your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts. Notice it doesn't grow content, it grows corrupt. The flesh is never satisfied... That's the deceptive nature of it.

Think of a prisoner who is released from prison, but still wears prison clothes & acts like a prisoner rather than a free man. You'd say, "Hey, you're a free man, you need to put on some new clothes & quit behaving like a prisoner!"

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, through the word of God, prayer & fellowship w/other believers.

New clothes have a tendency to give you a new mindset, have you ever noticed that? That's why you'd play "dress up" as a kid. You might dress as a soldier, or a super hero, my daughters have the princess dresses... Why? Because when they put on those clothes, their countenance changes, their mindset changes, they're a different person...

Listen, don't wait to *feel* like the new man before you *put on* the new man. Just do it. The feelings follow, we walk by faith.

But for the believer, there must be a break w/the past. Paul told the Romans, *"knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."*⁶ Jesus doesn't add to your old life; the old life dies altogether & He *is* our life, new life.

Don't focus on not doing wrong, focus on doing what's right (spiritually & otherwise). Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, receive a new mindset. What's a mindset? "A fixed mental disposition that predetermines a person's responses to, and interpretations of, situations." You had one mindset as an unbeliever, you have an altogether different mindset as a child of God. It's fixed on the spiritual, the eternal, the things that are in harmony w/Christ. (Whatever things are pure, noble, true, just, lovely, praiseworthy & of good report, set your mind on these things. Phil 4:8)

Put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness & holiness. We've been given new life. & If the life of Christ be in me, that will translate to a new mindset & a new lifestyle. But I have to make the choice don't I?

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ro 6:6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

By the very fact that Paul exhorts us to put one manner of living off & put another manner of living on... that presumes that I have a choice. Christ has set us free, but we can live like prisoners. He's given us life, but we can walk around in graveclothes...

But we've heard Christ, been taught *by* Christ, received the life *of* Christ, why choose now to rebel *against* Christ? But let's lead lives that are submitted *to* Christ in true righteousness (right relationships w/others) & holiness (right relationship w/God) for the glory of His name. Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

Lord help us to obey Your word, that we put off concerning our former conduct & put on the new man being renewed in the spirit of our minds. We're asking God that You would help us in our relationship w/others & our relationship w/You. That we honor You w/our lives, being in the world but not of the world to the glory of Your name.

New life awaits you, but repentance is in order. Turning from your sin, trusting in J.C. He'll forgive you of your sin & make you brand new. If you'll hear His voice, receive His conviction, don't harden your heart. Open your heart, receive J.C. today.