

WALKING IN YOUR NEW IDENTITY

Ephesians 4:17-24

INTRODUCTION: This passage of scripture draws a sharp line between the old life and the new life in Christ. Paul shows us how empty and dark the old walk really is, then reveals how the knowledge of Christ transforms us. Finally, he calls us to actively put off the old man and put on the new, created in true righteousness and holiness.

I. THE FUTILITY AND DARKNESS OF THE OLD WALK

vv. 17-19

A. The futility of the Gentile mind. v. 17

1. The reasoning of the Gentiles runs in circles and never reaches God's truth.
 - a. "Futility" Greek – (ματαιότης) mataiotēs = that which is devoid of truth and appropriateness.
 - b. The encouragement is for the believers to no longer follow after the pattern of the rest of the Gentiles.
 - c. There is a pattern established by worldly thinking that never leads to the truth.
2. They build life on temporary, empty pursuits rather than eternal realities.
 - a. Without Jesus, what does a person's mind begin to focus on?

- b. The entire focus is on earthly things.

Philippians 3:18-19

- c. Even as believers, we can sometimes become distracted by worldly pursuits. That's not us anymore.

- 3. Their "wisdom" cannot produce righteousness or peace.

- a. Earthly wisdom is truly in direct contrast with the wisdom that is from above. *James 3:15-17*

- b. Part of what Paul is doing here is drawing a sharp contrast between what the life they used to be part of.

- c. I was talking with a woman steeped in legalism – a performance-based gospel. It reminded me of the way I used to think and made me grateful that I no longer think that way.

B. A walk that contradicts Christ's call. *v.17*

- 1. Unbelievers "walk" (live) in a manner that opposes new life in Jesus.

- a. Earlier in this letter, Paul talked about how they once walked in the same manner.

Ephesians 2:1-2

- b. Contrasting our life now with how we used to live isn't for the purpose of boasting, but for the purpose of thankfulness.
 - c. It reminds us that only Jesus Christ could have made this change.
- 2. Their lifestyle is shaped by culture and desire, not by revelation.
 - a. How many of you get excited about revelation from the Word of God?
 - b. Sometimes I'm studying at my desk and the Lord shows me something in the Bible and I get so excited, I have to share it with Fanny.
 - c. We went to see the Petersen's and there was joy in the whole concert, but the part that sticks with me is how Jesus was honored.
- 3. They normalize behaviors that Christ has called us out of.
 - a. It truly is because of the grace of God that our behaviors have changed.
 - b. Grace trained us. **Titus 2:11-12**
 - c. It wasn't the law or a list of do's and don'ts.

C. Darkened understanding and moral callousness.
vv.18-19

1. By being darkened in their understanding, they misread reality without God's light.
 - a. The people who don't know God truly have their eyes blinded by the enemy.
 - b. Sometimes I have people make negative comments on my videos that talk about the goodness of God.
 - c. I love it when that happens, because it gives me the opportunity to pray for them.
2. They are alienated from the life of God through ignorance and hardness of heart.
 - a. Ignorance is being uninformed. They just don't know.
 - b. When it is coupled with hardness of heart, it means they are refusing to be informed.
 - c. Jesus was grieved at the hardness of the Pharisees heart. Even a miracle couldn't change their opinion. **Mark 3:1-6**
3. By being callous they have lost sensitivity as they give themselves over to unrestrained lust and greed for uncleanness. **v.19**

- a. When I play my guitar regularly, I develop callouses on my fingers and I don't feel the pressure of the strings.
- b. When someone has become so calloused they get to the point of not experiencing the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
- c. Futility of mind, darkened in understanding, alienated from life in God, ignorant, hardness of heart, calloused... all leading to sensuality, greed and every kind of impurity.

II. THE TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

vv.20-21

A. "That is not the way you learned Christ." **v.20**

- 1. Christ Himself is the curriculum: we don't just learn doctrines, we learn Him.
 - a. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Him.
 - b. In Philippians Paul talks about knowing everything about Jesus, from his sufferings to His death, to His resurrection. That through all of it he would become like Jesus.
Philippians 3:10-11
 - c. This isn't talking about a one-day resurrection after we die physically. It's talking about dying to our old self and rising again in Jesus.

2. The Gospel doesn't refine the old man; it creates a new man. **2 Corinthians 5:17**

a. Parents will sometimes send their children to church in hopes that it will make them a better person.

b. They don't need to be a better person, they need to be a new person.

c. The same goes for all adults.

3. Grace, not performance, is the foundation of what we are taught.

a. When we grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ we grow in grace. And vice versa. They are coupled together and not separated.

2 Peter 3:18

b. In John 1:17 it tells us that grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

c. Some people try to couple Jesus with the law and they come up with works oriented gospel.

B. Hearing Him and being taught by Him. **v.21**

1. We don't just hear about Christ, we hear from Him.

a. This increases our faith. **Romans 10:17**

- b. It establishes our fellowship. *Revelation 3:20*
- c. It provides guidance for our lives. *John 10:27*
- 2. We are taught in Him – within relationship and acceptance, not outside it. *v.21*
 - a. It's not just learning about Him, but it's learning Him as we spend time with Him.
 - b. I had heard about Phil Goudeaux, then I met him and started hunting and fishing with him.
 - c. People think they know about Jesus, but they will never truly know Him aside from relationship.
- 3. We experience ongoing discipleship, as He continues to teach us and shape us as we follow Him.
 - a. That discipleship process flows out of our friendship with Jesus. *John 15:15*
 - b. We can be influenced by people we watch, but the ones who really influence us are the ones you spend time with.
 - c. Those people can either be a good influence or a bad influence. I had to get away from my cousins because of it.

C. Truth as it is in Jesus. *v.21*

1. Jesus is the standard and definition of truth about God.
 - a. If you want to know the truth and character of God, learn about Jesus.
 - b. He is known as Emmanuel: God with us.
 - c. The Jews wanted to kill Jesus because of His claim to be God. **John 10:30**
2. In Him we learn the truth of our new identity as being reconciled and not alienated.
 - a. We are now holy and blameless before God. **Colossians 1:21-22**
 - b. Once we come into a relationship with Jesus, our hearts are softened, our understanding is enlightened, and our actions begin to change.
 - c. Again, Paul is drawing a contrast and showing them just how far they've come.
3. This truth renews our minds and replaces the futility of our former thinking.
 - a. It's our knowledge of the truth that sets us free from our former way of living. **John 8:32**
 - b. Notice, it isn't our right actions that set us free.

- c. I tried the right action thing and it just bound me up.

III. PUTTING ON THE NEW MAN vv.22-24

A. Putting off the old man. v.22

1. The old man is corrupt according to deceitful lusts and cannot be reformed.
 - a. What we once were, we no longer are.
Titus 3:3-5
 - b. Not because of works of righteousness, but because of His mercy.
 - c. The old man is washed away, we don't want to be running down river to find him, let him go.
2. We make a decisive break from our former man who engaged in patterns of sin. v.22
 - a. We just simply come to the place of saying, "That's not me anymore."
 - b. That's what the Holy Spirit is doing for us.
 - c. When I got a hold of this principle, it changed my life. *John 16:8-11*
3. We align practically with what Christ has already accomplished on the cross.

- a. This means that we now consider ourselves dead to sin. **Romans 6:9-11**
- b. When we look at ourselves in the mirror, do we see a sinner, or do we see someone who is alive to God?
- c. When we are facing temptations, we can immediately say, "I'm dead to that now."

B. Being renewed in the "spirit" of the mind. **v.23**

1. Renewal begins by changing our mental disposition.
 - a. "Spirit" Greek – (πνεῦμα) pneuma = current of air, breath, vital principle, mental disposition.
 - b. Because the word "spirit" is coupled with mind, we know it was to do with the right mindset.
 - c. This is not talking about our born again spirit or the Holy Spirit.
2. Renewal comes through the knowledge of Christ and His finished work.
 - a. Does anyone know of a good scripture that talks about the grace and peace being multiplied to us through that knowledge?
2 Peter 1:2-4

- b. I love how God will emphasize certain principles. (Thanks Joe Thornton)
 - c. It has been “granted to us”. It is an accomplished work.
- 3. This is a continual process as the Holy Spirit reshapes our thinking by the Word of God.
 - a. When it comes down to it, most of our turmoil, issues, sinfulness, etc. come by way of wrong thinking.
 - b. I really don’t think we can ever overemphasize the importance of being in the Word of God.
 - c. Have you ever said, “The other day I just spent way too much time reading the Bible”. Usually I hear people saying the opposite.

C. Putting on the new man. **v.24**

- 1. The new man is a new creation, which is created after the likeness of God.
 - a. This takes us back to our original design as seen in Adam and Eve. **Genesis 1:27**
 - b. Remember that to be justified means “just as if we never sinned.”
 - c. When Adam and Eve were first created, they didn’t have to repent of sin.

2. We are created in true righteousness which can only be received by grace. v.24
 - a. Think about God and ask, “Is He lacking in righteousness or holiness?”
 - b. So when we put on our new self, created in His likeness, we are not lacking in righteousness or holiness.
 - c. Righteousness is the condition of being acceptable to God, while holiness is the fulfillment of religious obligation for that righteousness which was fulfilled by Christ.
3. We are created in holiness of the truth which flows from the truth in Jesus and not legalistic effort.
Hebrews 10:10
 - a. “Sanctified” Greek – (ἁγιάζω) hagiazō = to be separated from the things of the world and dedicated unto God.
 - b. Jesus accomplished it once and for all through the offering of Himself.
 - c. We cannot add to it.

CONCLUSION: In Christ, we are not called to polish the old life, but to put it off. Through the knowledge of Jesus and His finished work, our minds are renewed and our identity is

restored. So walk as the new creation you are—righteous, holy, accepted, and alive to God by grace.