

Old Man, New Man

Ephesians 4:17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.

¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.

¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ!--

²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,

²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,

²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,

²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

(Eph 4:17-24)

It's Too Obvious

MODERN CIVIL RIGHTS:

- A woman who has fought her whole life for the equal rights of women suddenly demands that a man who thinks himself

a women be allowed to run in a women's track and field race, where he shatters all known women's records and leaves every competitor in the dust, because we have to be fair to *all* women!

- A teacher fights loudly, publicly, and legally for any man who even looks at her the wrong way to be tried and prosecuted for rape only the next week to find herself demanding that her friend Pat, a man, be allowed to go to a women's bathroom where there are little girls and defenseless women.
- A man who says that there is no such thing as male and female and that if you say there is you should be punished, spends his entire public career demanding that the law allow homosexual marriage.

Does it even need to be said that **a culture like this cannot survive**? It is auto-cannibalistic. Like the **ouroboros**—the snake that swallows its own tail, it eats itself alive. Its ideas are patently absurd. Yet, contradictory opinions coming from the same sources are **virtuously signaled celebrations** of progressive enlightenment. There's no enlightenment here, only darkness of the blackest kind and futility of the vainest sort. It is not loving to watch something eat itself alive. We must say something.

Jordan Peterson was asked his opinions about today's modern sexual confusion. He replied, "The most difficult things to talk about are the obvious. Because when they're obvious you don't have to talk about them. So, when people start to question the obvious, you don't know what to say."¹ Questioning the obvious is the very definition of "insane." To be "sane" is to be sound or healthy, especially of mind. To be *insane* is to be in a state of mind that prevents normal perception, behavior, or social interaction. The German equivalent "*verrückt*" was applied to the brain as to a clock that is out of order. In our case, I don't think things are right even two times a day.²

SPEAKING TO INSANITY?

So how do we make sense of this insanity? How do we speak to it? It seems to me that to fight it properly. And if we do not fight it, it will be to the death of us all, but especially of those poor lost souls propagating their mental illness. In one way, of course, insanity doesn't make sense at all. That's the point of the word. It is insane. In another way,

¹ Jordan Peterson, "Jordan Peterson on Modern Sexual Confusion," *Bite-Sized Philosophy* (July 19, 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQySz8lhho>.

² "Insane," *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/insane>.

however, the insanity has to come from someplace. But where? How has it been possible for a culture not long ago steeped in a mix of Christian-Victorian-Fundamentalist ethics to drift so quickly into moral totalitarian oblivion?

Consider [Victorian England](#), the idealized culture of the BBC, but hardly a Christian culture, just one that honored politeness, orderliness, and tender-mindedness in exchange for [prudishness and hypocrisy](#).³ If you are looking to speak to our culture by insisting that we have somehow broken away from that, you haven't begun to understand the real problem. Or maybe you are tempted to use what came just before it, fighting culture with culture using the height of Puritanism in England, not knowing it was said to have been "[one of the most aggressive, brutal, rowdy, outspoken, riotous, cruel and bloodthirsty nations in the world](#)." We could multiply this kind of sickness in cultures all day long.

The Apostle Paul speaks directly to this issue and [its only solution](#). It is both a sobering yet needed word to us, while at the same time being the foundational starting point for any proper correction of human behavior. But [it isn't something that can be applied to culture](#). No, unless that culture

³ [Harold Perkin](#), *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880* (London: Routledge, 1969), 280.

is **the church** made up of those born again into Christ Jesus. That in turn tells you the only solution for a culture like ours (unless you want to force moral changes upon people with violence). We have to tell people the bad news and the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have to have a heart change.

Ephesians 4:17-24

IT'S PLACE IN THE LETTER

The passage is **Ephesians 4:17-24**. It is difficult to figure its exact place in the overall argument of the letter. I discovered a scholarly resource this week where the author sees **the entire letter as a chiasm** with each letter subdivided into its own chiasms. In his way of looking at it, rather than chs. 1-3 as one half and 4-6 as the second half, the center of the letter is what we just came out of (**4:1-16**) and our passage now parallels **3:14-21**. Each first half parallel would add its own theological reasoning for the second half application of ethics. In this case, the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge parallels walking in love as Christ loved us!

- (A) Eph 1:1–2: Grace and Peace
- (B) Eph 1:3–14: To the Praise of His Glory in Love
- (C) Eph 1:15–23: Gift of Christ in Love as Head Over All to the Church
- (D) Eph 2:1–10: Walking by the Great Love with Which He Loved Us
- (E) Eph 2:11–22: The Peace That Establishes Unity as a Gift of Love
- (F) Eph 3:1–13: Paul to Make Known the Mystery of Christ in Love
- (G) Eph 3:14–21: The Love of Christ That Surpasses Knowledge
- (H) Eph 4:1–16: To Walk toward the Unity of All in Love**
- (G') Eph 4:17–32: Walk in the Truth of Christ's Love**
- (F') Eph 5:1–6: Walk in Love as Christ Loved Us
- (E') Eph 5:7–14: Walk as Children of Light in Love
- (D') Eph 5:15–6:9: Walk in Love as Those Who Are Wise
- (C') Eph 6:10–13: Be Empowered in Love to Withstand Evil
- (B') Eph 6:14–22: Beloved Tychicus Will Encourage Your Hearts
- (A') Eph 6:23–24: Peace, Love, and Grace⁴

In our actual text, he sees it as literarily tied through the end of the chapter.

- A. 17-19. “God” “every”
- B. 20-21. “heard” “truth”
- C. 22. “put off” “old man”
- C¹. 23-24 “put on” “new man”
- B¹. 25-29. “truth” “those who hear”
- A¹. 30-32. “God” “all”⁵

Others, however, see these verses tied in a chiasm to that runs from **4:1-17**, **4:1-19**, or **4:17-5:2**,⁶ or **4:1-24**,⁷ that is,

⁴ John Paul Heil, *Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), v-vii.

⁵ Ibid., 187-88.

⁶ Ephesians chiasms at <https://www.chiasmusxchange.com/category/g-romans-philimon/ephesians/> or

⁷ Christine Miller: “Ephesians 4 Chiastic Structures,” (Aug 13, 2013), <https://christinesbiblestudy.wordpress.com/2013/08/13/ephesians-4-chiastic-structures/>

if they see it tied to anything at all. **The consensus** has been that everything from here on out “**must be read more or less as a pastiche of random Pauline teachings**” that is “**difficult to discern any well-woven train of thought.**”⁸ In other words, Paul just decides to start talking about whatever ethical problems come to his mind. It is “**no more than a ragbag of advice.**”⁹

I tend to think that our verses are tied to a unit that begins in vs. 17 and runs through the end of the chapter. This means that the ethics that comes at the end parallel in a reverse sense the darkness found in the beginning, and this means there’s nothing random going on here at all. **We will look into that next time**, because there is a **natural break** at **vs. 25** with the word “**therefore.**” *Therefore*, we will look at only 17-24 here, as there is too much to discuss by adding it all.

As for our passage, **vs. 17** begins, “**Now this...**” There is also a natural break at **vs. 20** which begins, “**But...**” What he is going to do is **contrast two things**: *Now this ... but that.* **What he contrasts is the key** to understanding everything

⁸ **Gombis**, *Dissertation*, 133. He is summarizing others, this is not his view.

⁹ **Ernest Best**, *Ephesians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 81.

that follows in terms of commands. It is also the explanation for why cultures like ours become what they become.

OLD MAN, NEW MAN

The contrast is in **vv. 22** and **24** (the center of the chiasm)—the “**old self**” and the “**new self**.” I want to explain this up front and then return to it later. In my opinion, many translations, including the ESV, **obscure the language and thus the theology**. I’ll chock it up to the political correctness of our day that seems nearly inescapable, even in Bible translations that don’t want to give into it. The ESV and others have “**put off your old self**” or “**put on the new self**.” The RSV and others have “**nature**.” The word is *anthropos*, and **all older translations read “man.”**

I’m not one who is inherently opposed to translating *anthropos* as something other than “man.” For example, sometimes all humans are in mind. In this case, the only word I think is correct is “man.” **The reason why** is because though he is talking *to individuals*, those individuals *only make sense* in view of **the Biblical Adams**. And “Adam” means man, not “self” or “nature.”

Why would I say he has Adams in mind? **Vs. 24** harkens back to **Eden**. “Created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (It is literally, “the one created according to God” where “likeness” is supplied by translators). The idea is almost certainly parallel to **Colossians 3:10**, “according to the image of the one who created it.”

Eph 4:24	Col 3:10
and to put on the new self, created after <i>the likeness</i> of God in true righteousness and holiness	and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

“The image of God” is creation and Adam. In **vv. 20-21**, he certainly has Christ Jesus in mind—and he elsewhere calls Christ the “**last Adam**” (**1Co 15:45**). It is in these two Adams that two things are contrasted throughout the writings of Paul (e.g. **Rom 5:12-19**; **1Co 15:21-22, 45**). That’s exactly what he is doing here.

Given this and the rest of the context, the translation “**self**” is inexplicable to me. Yes, there is something of a change in the “**self**,” but this whole passage is brimming with corporateness, especially the corporate body of Christ

which is many members “in Jesus” (21). Besides, in the parallel, only a New Ager would think Christ came as a “self” rather than a man. The translation “nature” might make you think that Christians possess some kind of extra-human nature that unbelievers do not possess, i.e. we have a new nature that they do not have. But we are the same people we were before conversion, except that we have been made spiritually alive.¹⁰ While Jesus took on our human nature, Paul is not telling us to put off human nature or put on human nature.

Elsewhere, we are told to “put on” something. Romans 13:14 is an exact thought parallel. “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Rom 13:14). We can do this because it has already happened. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27). The gospel comes before the command. Substitute putting on the “new self” for the Lord Jesus Christ. It makes no sense. But putting on the new

¹⁰ Pink writes, “At the outset: we are the same persons all through. Neither the deprivation of spiritual life at the Fall, nor the communication of spiritual life at the new birth, affects the reality of our being in possession of what we commonly call human nature. By the Fall we did not become less than men; by regeneration we do not become more than men. That which essentially constitutes our manhood was not lost, and no matter whatever be imparted to us at regeneration, our individuality is never changed.” A. W. Pink, “The Two Natures,” *Studies in the Scriptures* (May-June 1939), <https://www.monergism.com/two-natures>. This article is a helpful study on what we mustn't mean but also what we can mean by the translation “nature.”

Adam does. We are to put on Christ even as we put off the old Adam. So the command is to put off the old man and put on the new man.

But what would it mean to put off Adam? Obviously, I'm not Adam and neither are you. Here is where you have to understand not ontology (what we are as people) but *eschatology* (where we are in time). "Old man" is parallel in the Bible "the flesh" and this in turn is parallel not to a body but to an "age."¹¹ Christ "gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age" (Gal 1:4).

In Ephesians, this evil "age" and the future perfect "age" overlap. Christ has been placed "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come" (Eph 1:21). This necessitates that they overlap. These ages are in one sense *the age of Adam* and *the age of the last Adam*, or *the age of sin* and *the age of righteousness*. They are **two cosmic realms** or spheres that overlap one another, for Christ brought the age to come down now to such a degree that we are said to be seated in heavenly places though we are still alive and on earth (2:5-6) and yet, we clearly are not

¹¹ A good short discussion is Richard Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1978), 106-109.

rid of the old man, even though we have truly already put on Christ. This is **the schizophrenia of being a Christian** of living with the old man and new man.

ONLY THE OLD MAN

This schizophrenia does not exist for the non-believer, except in as much as they go **against their consciences**. But those are fragile things, easily broken, effortlessly cut and severed such that you can suppress its voice almost completely. That's what our culture has now done. It was a culture with a conscience, but today that conscience has been silenced almost entirely (they still live in God's world and so their conscience inescapably comes out in things they have not yet thought about. But this is precisely why the insanity is growing exponentially. As soon as they see their own failure to suppress something new, they now do so immediately in their self-righteous hatred of truth).

This is not good news. Here is where I want to turn to the first half of our passage. **Vv. 17-19** tell us some things that **escapes most people** because **they haven't read/heard it** and **many others even when they have**. In three verses it describes the **futility, darkness, alienation, ignorance, hardness,**

and **callousness** of “*Gentiles*.” This in turn leads to exactly what we see happening in our culture. Except this was written 2,000 years ago. In other words, the insanity should not surprise you! It has always been there. What you see happening in our culture right now is the default of humanity, not the exception. The exception is when we act well.

It says, “**Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity**” (**Eph 4:17-19**). There are two things that escape people here.

The first is the **sinfulness that comes from their own hardness of heart and callousness**, which is a synonym. This is the first of two problems, not one. To be **calloused** is to have a tuft of dead skin develop on something like your hand or foot because you use it so much. Here, the callous is on your heart because you use it to sin so much.

This makes your **heart hard**. We first read about a hard heart in Exodus with Pharaoh, a Gentile. The very first reference says, “**I will harden his heart**” (**Ex 4:21**). It says the

same thing over and over again. God will harden his heart (7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17). God does this to show his glory over Pharaoh and to redeem his people from slavery (Ex 9:16; Rom 9:17). It is important to see this **supernatural hardening** here not only so that you can understand God's sovereignty, but so that you can also see the second problem that we will come to momentarily.

But first, there is **another force at work** in Pharaoh. Pharaoh is said to **harden in his own heart** on more than one occasion (8:15; 8:32; 9:34).¹² Many people like to make this one or the other. Some Arminians say that God only reacted, despite the fact that God hardens the heart first in the text. Some Calvinists want to deny that Pharaoh did any hardening himself. Both of those ideas are unbiblical.

What is going on here is **a dance between divine sovereignty and human responsibility**. Both are equally true. I would argue that both are simultaneously true, though it was clearly God's prerogative to do it first. If you put **clay** out in the hot sun, it will become hard. Why? Because of the sun. Yet *also, because of the clay*. If you think it is only the sun, try putting **wax** in the same hot sun and see how long it takes

¹² There are several instances where the agent of the hardening is left unspoken. It could be one or the other or both together. 7:14, 22; 8:19; 9:7; 35.

to become hard. Rather, it becomes soft. Why? Because of the sun *and the wax*. The sun does its job. The two substances react very differently to it and do their own job.

Hard hearts are said to be **the sad possession of all the children of Adam** after the fall. Gentiles like Pharaoh and Sihon (**Dt 2:30**) and all the inhabitants of Canaan (**Josh 11:20**) have them. The Israelites did too (**Dt 29:4; 2Ch 36:11; Isa 63:17; Ezek 11:19**). No one is exempt. As he says in Romans 1 of everyone, “**their foolish hearts were darkened**” (**Rom 1:21**). This is due in no small measure to original sin. We all sinned “**in Adam**.” He was our head and we all die in him (**Rom 5:12ff**). Some people miss this problem of human sin because they deny it in one form or another. There is no escaping it here. It is a massive problem for everyone.

What else does this old man look like? This question begins to take us to the **second problem**. They have **futile minds** and **darkened understanding**. The verse a moment ago, Romans 1:21, is an exact parallel. “**For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened**” (**Rom 1:21**). Romans 1 is a long explanation for the pervasive depravity we see in the world. It begins with something so simple. They did not honor

God. This in turn leads to futility and darkness. This in turn leads to foolish pride (22). This then leads them, importantly, to worship false gods (23).¹³ So then, God gives them over to every kind of wickedness; he allows them to do exactly what they want.

How Sin Spreads in Romans 1

1. Do not honor and thank God
2. Leads to futility and darkness of mind and heart
3. Leads to foolish pride
4. Leads to the worship of false gods
5. Leads to God giving us over to do what we want.

The word “futile” is the word we find throughout Ecclesiastes: *Vanity*. It refers, as someone says to “a view of reality apart from a consideration of God and his eschatological judgment.”¹⁴ In the OT, it also “denoted the futility of idol-worship,”¹⁵ that is, the worship of the invisible created realm. That’s exactly what Paul said too.

¹³ Theodoret is good on this in Ephesians. “At first their sickness was lawlessness. Then it became indulgence. Having slipped then into a lawless way of life, they gradually came to suffer from lack of remorse. Finally they ventured out toward every sin without fear, living the life of corruption beyond indulgence. This is what he means by “becoming greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness” (Theodoret, *Epistle to Ephesians* 4.19).

¹⁴ Gombis, Dissertation, 140, n. 18.

¹⁵ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 320.

Darkness will become a theme later in Ephesians. One of the important verses will say, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness...” (**Eph 6:12**). This is what Paul called “the course of this world ... the prince of the power of the air” (**Eph 2:2-3**) which we saw was related intimately to darkness. In other words, we are beginning to see that the second problem is outside of us and it has to do with the unseen realm.

Paul uses this same language in Athens when he alludes to the “**Deuteronomy 32 Worldview**,” saying that God “made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him [i.e. darkness] and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us” (**Acts 17:26-27**). He is referring to **Deuteronomy 32:7-8** when God allotted the nations to the sons of God because of their mutual sin at the Tower of Babel. The Darkness is caused, says Psalm 82, by those sons of God misruling and leading the nations into their worship rather than the worship of Yahweh. It even gives a catalogue of their sins (**Ps 82:2-5**), concluding that “**they walk about in darkness.**”

Darkness and vanity are words particularly describing the fallen supernatural realm of demons and angels.

Ephesians is teaching the same thing right here, making this by far the more missed of the two problems. In turning this entirely into a human problem of original sin, we miss **the cosmic problem** of the powers and rulers and authorities that this entire letter is talking about that Jesus had to subdue, even as some turn the problem entirely into “the devil made me do it” and take away their own personal responsibility of being a sinner in Adam.

Notice it talks about Gentiles next being “**alienated from the life of God**” because of the “**ignorance**” that is in them and their hardness of heart. *Alienation from the life of God*. They are not near him, though he is near to each one of us. They are estranged from him, enemies enslaved to sin, death, and the devil.

This *ignorance* is an external problem brought on by the powers and rulers who have deceived the Gentiles. They have led men astray. This is everywhere universal in Jewish Second Temple thought and in Ephesians. This was the point of talking about everyone earlier in the letter who “**once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince or the power of the air, the spirit that is now at**

work into the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind” (Eph 2:1-2). Notice for just a moment the end of Eph 4:19, “... have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.” This is exactly what he said back in Ch. 2. Also, it might be wise to mention the verbs here are passive participles, that is darkening and alienation are things that “happen to them, though, of course, they are not entirely blameless.”¹⁶ The point is, the powers had a vice-grip on the world (at the sovereign control of Yahweh!) and Jesus had to do something about it.

In his dissertation on Ephesians, Timothy Gombis (who by the way shows no knowledge of Michael Heiser) says, “What is important ... is that the cultures and nations under the rule of these powers have come to resemble the powers themselves, along with their selfish and self-destructive behavior ... Just as the powers have incurred the judgment of God because they have become graspers after the cosmos (Eph 6:12) instead of faithful stewards of the rule of God, so the Old Humanity is characterized by the sins mentioned in

¹⁶ Gombis, 140.

the two triads in Eph 4:19 and 5:3).”¹⁷ In this way, we can speak of another supernatural hardening, this time from those fallen entities that control the sons of disobedience, causing them to walk in darkness, a theme that we will explore much more in Ephesians 5.

What are those sins? In vs. 19 it is very clear, “Sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.” Calvin says, “we are completely dedicated to it.” Notice the word “greedy.” Someone else says, “They have immersed themselves in an undisciplined lifestyle of gratifying every self-oriented and unholy pleasure.”¹⁸ Gentiles do these things happily, lustfully, greedy to gratify every carnal desire they can think up.

The word for sensuality here means “voluptuousness” or “debauchery.” It characterizes Sodom and Gomorrah (2Pe 2:7) and the pagan world generally (Eph 4:19), also heresy and apostasy (Jude 4; 2Pe 2:2, 18). The special sense of sexual excess is found everywhere in the NT (Rom 13:13; 2Co 12:21; 2Pe 2:2, 18). Man necessarily falls victim to this when cut off from God.¹⁹

¹⁷ Gombis, 138.

¹⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon.*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 327.

¹⁹ Otto Bauernfeind, “Ἀσέλγεια,” ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 490.

Perhaps you can see how this is **so relevant** to the 21st century where in my opinion, sexual sin and heresy is the root of all the rest. This is a runaway train on no tracks. It knows no bounds. The sins know no end. As someone (it may have been Peterson) pointed out, sexual choice is now the canonical identifier. Pride Day has turned into Pride Week which has turned into Pride Month. There is no stopping it from the outside any longer.

Ambrosiaster makes a very important observation here, it seems to me.

They have lost their moral compass through lack of hope in a future life. Living now as if they had no future, they pollute their own lives with the foulest behaviors. They refuse to submit themselves to the most elementary requirement of faith, which brings their pleasure-seeking into accountability in relation to the future life. It is this future life that these people declare to be ridiculous. Hence they pretend to have a right to debauch themselves.

(**Ambrosiaster**, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 4.19)

He wrote that 1,750 years ago! There is nothing new under the sun. Then, now—people need hope in the future! And

for that, they must be changed from the inside by a message that comes to them from the outside.

THE NEW MAN

Hence, the change in our passage. **Vs. 20** begins, “**But that...**” “**But that is not the way you learned Christ!**” To learn Christ is the Gospel! But this is a strange way of putting it. All it means is that you learn Christ by being shown who he is, what he did, how he acted, and then actualizing that in as much as you are “in Christ” yourselves. We are, “**Taught the entirely new way of living as ‘the body of Christ’—to embody the salvation brought to [you] by God in Christ.**”²⁰

This is parallel in the next verse to “**hearing about him**” and being “**taught in him.**” The meaning all comes down to Christ himself, not you. “**... as the truth is in Jesus.**” Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (**John 14:6**). He is the Truth and the Truth is in him. The darkness has given way to light because the dark powers have been defeated and the Light has shone in the darkness and the darkness has not

²⁰ **Gombis**, 139.

overcome it (**John 1:5**).²¹ But being “In Christ” is the key. If you are in him via the vital union through the Holy Spirit, then the truth is now *in you*. It only get in you if you are in him. And that only happens when you believe and confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

This truth comes to you through Christ who **teaches you directly by himself**. In other words, when the Word comes and you learn Christ, it is Christ himself teaching you. Remember how **Ambrosiaster** talked about the hopelessness of the future which is why people engage in their sensuality? Well, he speaks here too.

It is Christ himself who teaches us about himself! When we are “taught in him,” we learn who he is, how great we should reckon him to be and what hope is in him. We learn “in him” what sort of people believers ought to be. Any one who has “learned Christ” knows that he rose from the dead to be the pattern for the faithful. He teaches that there is great hope after this death for those who love God.

²¹ We dealt with the phrase “assuming that you have heard about him” in a previous sermon. Some suppose because of this that Paul didn’t write the letter. But the opening that it was to the Ephesians is not in the original. In other words, it was meant as a circular letter and obviously some of those reading it will not have known or been taught by Paul, even though most in Ephesus would have been.

So people must be taught by Christ in order to have hope. When they are, then the truth embodied by him who had no sin shows you the need to put off the old man. That old man “**belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires**” (22). You see? It is part of that present evil age. I’ve never been sure why Christians would need to do this if it wasn’t true about them. Some are of the opinion that the old man, the flesh, is completely gone at the new birth. Or, if it isn’t, that they can somehow totally overcome it. This form of perfectionism knows no place in the Scripture.

Christians sin. They keep sinning because they are still in this world. We have not been taken out of it. You mustn’t say, “**Why is he still here if I’m a Christian.**” That question is actually proof that you are a Christian (what non-Christian cares?), but it is a foolish question because it pretends that the old man should be gone now. Who told you that? Rather, you are told to put him off daily.

Here, it is like clothing that you have to take off every day, you must **keep taking off the old man**. The reason is because as one translation puts it, that old man is “**thoroughly rotted by its deceptive desires**” (CJB). Those desires

come from without, through the powers of the air and darkness. Those desires come from within, through the power of sin in your heart.

Those desires are what hold all unbelievers captive. Thus, when a culture or an individual act out in self-cannibalistic ways, it should not surprise you in the slightest. When they question the obvious, you should know exactly what to say. “You need new life. I know where you can get it!” The only way that comes to a person is through the gospel of Jesus Christ being told to a person and the Holy Spirit of God using it like a seed to form a new life. A friend of mine explains:

As a pagan, I was quite vocal in my hostility toward God. This was often expressed in my general disdain for those created in His image, and, in particular, disgust for those I thought were useless to me. I was outspoken in favor of eugenics and abortion. But God pulled me out of this hateful rebellion by His grace. He changed my heart to love Him and men. He changed my mind, giving me Christ's.²²

²² C. R. Cali, *The Doctrine of Balaam* (Minneapolis, MN: Wrath and Grace Publishing, 2019), 2.

On a cultural level, when law goes out the window, conscience is treated like a bug on your kitchen floor, and self-governance is no longer possible, there is nothing left to do but give people the only hope that will bring them out of their miserable enslaved, darkened, futile, alienated, ignorant, hardened, calloused condition, **one person at a time**. This is something the church of Jesus Christ should never have forgotten, but she clearly has. It's like anything to solve the world's ills but the Gospel.

A person must be “**renewed in their spirit of their minds**” (**Eph 4:23**). This only happens once a person is converted and given new life. What this looks like here is a new self “**created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness**” (24). What it will look like after these verses is the behavior that exemplifies Christians and honors God. But for now, let us finish with this idea of **the image of God**.

Here and in **Colossians 3:10** (the parallel), the image is referred to in **three ways**: true—**righteousness** and **holiness** and **knowledge**. In Genesis, the image is primarily a *function*. We are created *as* image-bearers to have dominion over the earth.²³

²³ Being created “as” the image and in this capacity is explained well by **Michael S. Heiser**, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First Edition (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 40-43.

I won't go too deep into the image other than to say that it is common for theologians to speak of it both in broad and narrow aspects, both what man is and what he does. Anthony Hoekema has a helpful illustration,

An eagle, for example, propels itself through the air by flying—this is one of its functions. The eagle would be unable to fly, however, unless it had wings—one of its structures. Similarly, human beings were created to function in certain ways: to worship God, to love the neighbor, to rule over nature, and so on. But they cannot function in these ways unless they have been endowed by God with the structural capacities that enable them to do so. So structure and function are both involved when we think of man as the image of God.²⁴

Usually, the “structures” include things like intelligence, reasoning, logic, emotions, self-awareness, morality, creativity, language, a soul, a conscience, volition, aesthetics, and so on.²⁵ The functions usually include things like do-

²⁴ Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Paternoster Press, 1986), 69.

²⁵ Heiser does not think these are part of the image, because single celled human fetus' do not have these, therefore they would not be image-bearers. However, it seems to me that every one of these is, however it works, encoded into human DNA. Therefore, like potential energy which

minion or worshiping or serving or loving. Knowledge, holiness, and righteousness seem to belong to this functional category.²⁶

What few seem to talk about, at least with **Ephesians 4:24**, however, is that while this likeness has been put into us through the new birth and the renewed mind by the Spirit, it is essentially something that belongs to Jesus himself. These things are created “after the likeness of God” and Jesus is the form of God (**Php 2:6**), the image of the invisible God (**Col 1:15**; **2Co 4:4**), the exact imprint of his nature (**Heb 1:3**). What I’m saying is, this is why it is so vital to be “in Christ” and why only being in Christ through faith that the insanity goes away. He is the perfect image. God does not give this to someone apart from Christ, because the perfect image only belongs truly and properly to Christ. Only when you are in Christ is this likeness now passed on to you through the life-giving Head of the body and Vine of the branches.

is real energy (kinetic energy is not the only true energy), these are really there in a single-celled human. I would, however, say that perhaps all of these attributes are shared by the animal kingdom. Therefore, these are necessary but not sufficient conditions to being image bearers.

²⁶ So **Hoekema**. “Various theologians have described this aspect of the image in several ways: as man's giving the right answer to God (Brunner); as man's living in love toward God and toward his neighbor (Otto Weber); as man's living in the right relationship to God, the neighbor, and creation (Hendrikus Berkhof); or as ‘concretely visible sanctification’ (G. C. Berkouwer). Thus, the image of God in the narrower sense means man's proper functioning in harmony with God's will for him.” 71-72.

We will go **on next time** to consider the “**how**” of **putting on the new self** and **putting off the old**. In fact, he explains it in **Eph 4:25**, “Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor...” and so on. **That’s how you do it**. But for now, the vital thing to know and understand is that you must first be in Christ to put on Christ.

Are you in Christ? Have you come to see his glories so described in this letter to this point? Have you considered his victories over sin and death and the devil? Have you learned of the freedom that comes from them?

If you have, then you will know that the insanity that plagues our culture also plagues each individual to one degree or another. For you have seen it in yourself and you have known the renewal of the new creation personally. Therefore, you can look at the world and despair or you can be joyful in the Lord for his grace to you. It is your choice. If you choose joy, then in that joy learn to walk in a way that is the opposite of your old man, the only man the world knows. Let them see the new man and thereby proclaim Christ’s victory to and over the powers. “**Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven**” (**Matt 5:16**).

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