



Spiritual Warfare: Pulling Down Strongholds

EPHESIANS 4:20-24

LESSON 10 – RENEWING YOUR MIND – PART 1

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Walk This Way?

- ▶ Those who are lost and without Christ walk “in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” But if we are saved, if we know Jesus, if we have repented of our sin and believed on Jesus, then we have not learned to walk this way!
- ▶ Ephesians 4:20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

You have not so learned Christ

- ▶ We have not so learned Christ. We have learned differently. Differently than what? Let us consider the evidence and fruit we have finished studying as it pertains to the life of the lost man and let us see how we have learned something different if we have learned from Christ.
- ▶ **Futility** - Before Christ our minds were futile. We were lost – not knowing where to go or even how to get there! But now we have purpose. And this is not some purpose driven drivel. No! We have real purpose. Jesus is our Lord and Savior and we are learning how to walk in victory over sin, but even beyond that we have a new goal, a new reason for living a deliberate life of godliness. Now we do all that we do for the glory of God. Eating, drinking, living, playing, relating, whatever we do we do it for God's glory. He is our priority where before self was the priority.

You have not so learned Christ

- ▶ **Darkened Understanding** - Before Christ we could not discern. Our minds were in a constant state of spiritual darkness groping for truth and meaning. Now we have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit – God Himself lives in us! He has sealed us for the day of redemption and in the meantime He gives us the ability to discern, to hear, understand, and obey His Word and His will. In Christ we have learned that we are free from the darkness and are able to walk in the light.
- ▶ **Alienated** - Before Christ we were alienated from the life of God. We were doomed as children of wrath. Now we have been made partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:3-4), we have been given eternal life, we have been adopted and are able to call God Father. We are no longer aliens and strangers, we are co-heirs with Christ and will one day rule with Him! We who were afar off have been brought near by His blood. We are held in His hands, indeed engraved upon His palms (Isaiah 49:16). Why engraved? We cannot be dropped, shaken loose, washed off, or otherwise released! We are in His hands for good and forever.

You have not so learned Christ

- ▶ **Ignorant** - Before Christ we were ignorant of the truth. We were quite unteachable too. Now we have been enlightened. The Word has been illumined by the Spirit. We have been given the ability to understand the Word of God. We are teachable. The Word teaches us and instructs us even when we sleep (Ps 16:7). Where once we were unable to grasp eternal truth now we are motivated to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven as we see things from God's own perspective.
- ▶ **Blind** - Before Christ we were blind! Our hearts were hard, cold, and dead. But though we once were blind now we can see. Somebody should write a song! We can see. We have been given new hearts. We were darkness and now are light in the Lord. Things make sense. We are growing and maturing and we are seeing more and more of God's handiwork in the world around us. And we long to see Him!!

You have not so learned Christ

- ▶ **Past Feeling** - Before Christ we were seared, our consciences were burned out, we were past feeling. Now we have fresh consciences! We can see the difference between right and wrong. We FEEL more than we ever have. The Spirit bears witness with our Spirit that we are children of God. Remember when you were first converted? Everything was new and fresh. Everyday should be that way for the believer as we grow in grace and walk by faith!
- ▶ **Given to Lewdness, Uncleanness, and Greediness** - Before Christ we were ruled by our passions, by our fleshly sinful desires. Now we are free! We are able to say no to sin. We can withstand temptation. We are no longer tossed about by the whims of our fallen flesh. Now in Christ we are clean, pure, holy, and free from selfishness. We are motivated to give to each other and to care for the Body of Christ. Our lives which were once centered on self are now centered on Christ. He is our all in all and everything this world has to offer we count but loss for knowing Christ.

You have not so learned Christ

- ▶ If indeed we have not so learned Christ then we should be radically different than the lost around us – and different from what we were before Christ.
- ▶ There are other ramifications of this phrase though that we must pause to consider. This means that any church and any person – believer or not – who is teaching people how to be selfish, lewd, greedy, or leading them into ignorance instead of the truth – these people are not being taught about Jesus. Now let's think about this carefully.
- ▶ If we have learned Christ then we have learned the opposite of futile, ignorant self fulfillment and greed. But so many “churches” are using fleshly lusts, appeals to pride, entertainment, sensual excitement, greedy motives for self pleasure and fulfillment, and worldly methods and programs in order to try to reach people with the gospel!

You have not so learned Christ

- ▶ But here we have been told that we have not so learned Christ. Learning from Christ, and knowing Christ NEVER appeals to the flesh, to base instincts, to pride, to self esteem, or to our lusts! And yet here is the bulk of church “growth” methodology. Make lost people comfortable, accepting, and open to the truth of the gospel and the Person of Christ.
- ▶ NEWS FLASH – the world HATES Christ! Christ means death to self. Christ means the end of being ruled by lust and sin. Christ means the end of all that we are in our flesh. And frankly, the lost man does not want to be denied!

You have not so learned Christ

- ▶ Any church that teaches people to be worldly or that fails to confront worldliness is not teaching people the truth in Christ. Any church that embraces worldly business and marketing methods for church growth has yet to realize that we have not so learned Christ. Any church that confuses the Body for a business, the congregation for a demographic, the gospel for an advertisement, or the Christian life for a cake walk has not so learned Christ!
- ▶ Compare the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh found in Galatians 5 and ask this question – what is your church teaching you? If the results are not found in the Spiritual Fruit column then you are not being taught the Word of God. It really is that simple. In Christ we are a new creation. If we are new we will act like we are new. And if we are not acting like we are new, then sadly, we have not learned Christ or the gospel.

Have You Heard Him?

- ▶ Ephesians 4:20 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:
- ▶ We see then that there are two differences in this text between the saved and the lost. Those who know Christ, those who no longer walk in the futility of their mind are those who have heard Christ and have been taught by Him. What do these things mean? Is it that the saved have heard an audible voice? Have they been talking to Christ and hearing Him reply? And what is it to be taught by Him? Let us examine what the Scriptures say about hearing and being taught by Christ.
- ▶ **My Sheep Hear My Voice** - Jesus tells us that His sheep hear His voice. They recognize His leading and His prompting. They know His voice. How is it then that He speaks? What is this voice that we hear? Is it an audible human voice or is it an inner prompting? A burning in the bosom or a wave of warmth that flows over us? How does Jesus speak to us?

Have You Heard Him?

- ▶ Jesus speaks to us in a number of ways. The first and most obvious is through the written Word of God. As we read the Bible. It is the Word of God just as if He were right here talking to us now. He also speaks to us through the Holy Spirit as we are led by Him, as His Spirit bears witness with our spirit to the truth and impresses upon our hearts and minds the will and ways of God. We also hear Him and recognize His voice in the preaching of His Word and in godly counsel that we receive from teachers, counselors, and friends. But notice the common theme – these all are founded upon and part of the ministry of the Word of God. God speaks to us and leads us by His Spirit through the Bible.

Have You Heard Him?

- ▶ When we think we hear the Spirit leading us then we are to test what we hear against what? The Bible! The Word of God is our standard and guide and anything that God leads us to do will be in line with the clear teaching of Scripture. If we think we are hearing anything that violates the written Word of God then we have this sure knowledge – that is not the voice of Jesus! God never contradicts Himself and His Word recorded for us in Scripture is all the revelation we need to receive from Him.
- ▶ Notice too who it is that hears His voice. It is His sheep! Not the goats. But the sheep. There are several parables that make it clear that there are two kingdoms at work in this world – the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Of course they are not equal, but they are both operating. And the Bible teaches that there are citizens of these separate kingdoms. The kingdom of God is full of sheep and wheat. The kingdom of Satan is full of goats and tares. And no where do we hear in Scripture that a goat becomes a sheep or that a tare becomes a stalk of wheat. Be careful though – for ultimately only God knows which is which!

Have You Heard Him?

- ▶ That is why Jesus could say in John 10 to the Pharisees, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” Those who hear Jesus are those who are His! Those He has foreknown and predestined to be conformed into His image.
- ▶ Those who continue throughout their life to walk in the futility of their minds, never being changed as we have discussed – those do not know or hear Him! Those who are His hear Him and know His voice and obey.

Have You Heard Him?

- ▶ **The Holy Spirit Will Teach You** - It is not enough to just hear His voice for if we are to avoid walking the walk of the Gentiles then we must also be taught by Christ! And that is why we hear Him – so that we might be instructed and learn and grow.
- ▶ It is true after all that His Word has been breathed out (inspired) by the Holy Spirit and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16-17) so that we might be completely equipped for every good work. It is also true that the Spirit has been given to us to indwell us specifically so that we can be taught the truth!
- ▶ The Holy Spirit has been given as our Comforter and Helper. He inspired the Word of God and now He calls it to our minds, reminds us of it, and teaches us from it as we grow in grace. He leads us into all truth. He encourages us and motivates us and edifies us with the Word. He empowers us and enlightens us and illumines our mind to the truth.

Have You Heard Him?

- ▶ Where does assurance come from? From the Spirit speaking to us and teaching us from the Word of God. With this Word He calls us to life, equips us to live, and prepares us for death! With the Word He convinces us of sin, righteousness, and the judgment to come. He convicts. He instructs. And the process of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is the process of being taught all that He has commanded us.
- ▶ As we compare these two walks then we see Psalm 1 unfold before our very eyes! Listen to this Psalm: **Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.**

Have You Heard Him?

- ▶ We can walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of those who mock God. Or we can delight in the Word of God! When the Bible is our meditation, we avoid the pathway that leads to destruction. We bear fruit. Again, what makes the difference? The Word of God.
- ▶ Do you love the Word of God? Are you hungry and thirsty when it comes to reading and meditating on the Word of God? One sure sign that you are NOT saved is a lack of desire for the Word of God. This is frightening but it is true. The lost are not hungry for the Word of God and they are not satisfied by reading it. They do not hear His voice and are not taught by Him though it.
- ▶ But those of us who have heard His voice and who have been taught by Him, we have this duty – when we hear His voice, we follow Him! Do you hear Him? Do you follow? If we have heard Him and if we have been taught by Him then we know that we are His indeed!

Next Week

- ▶ Lesson 11 – Renewing Your Mind
- ▶ Part 2 – Can You Handle the Truth? – Eph. 4:21-22