



Ephesians

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...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, Ephesians 4:22

As the truth is in Jesus, who is the Christ, Paul now exhorts the Ephesians (and thus us) to that which is right. He instructs "that you put off, concerning your former conduct..." This refers to all of the things that preceded their calling on Christ which he described of the "rest of the Gentiles" in verses 17-19. They once walked in such futility and now they have been called by Christ, who is Jesus the Man, to step away from "the old man."

This "old man" is the former walk. It is that which is opposed to the new calling in Christ. Logically, if we had to be called out of that life, then it is incumbent on us to remain out of it. It would be contradictory to be called out of something if it were ok to return to it. If someone were unknowingly swimming in a poisoned lake, and if they were then called to come out of that lake in order to live, it would make no sense to again say, "I'm going for a swim in the lake today." Unfortunately, Christians far too often decide to return to the poisoned lake, time and time again.

But Paul exhorts us to realize that this "old man" is "that which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." There can be no health in returning to that which grows corrupt. Instead, there can only be further corruption. These "deceitful lusts" are explained by verse 19 as lewdness and the working of all uncleanness and greediness.

The words "which grows corrupt" are passive, and therefore they mark "the progressive condition of corruption which characterizes 'the old man'" (Vincent's Word Studies). The old

man is set in corruption because this is its very nature. It bears a process of degradation which can never become Christ-like. This is because it is according to (as the Greek properly reads), “lusts of deceit.” It is as if Paul personifies “deceit.” If one follows the old man, they follow Deceit. If one puts off the old man, they can then properly follow Christ.

Life application: The Bible stands as a warning sign by the great ocean of corruption – “Do not swim in these waters!” How is it then that we constantly feel the need to return and plunge into that which can only corrupt us? Let us endeavor to fix our eyes on Jesus and pursue life and health which is found in Him alone.

...and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, Ephesians 4:23

This is an exhortation from Paul, and thus “the spirit of your mind” is not speaking of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, those translations which capitalize “Spirit” here are incorrect. Man is not ever considered the subject of the Holy Spirit. The times when the Holy Spirit is mentioned, the subject is in relation to God and His redemptive work.

Understanding this, he exhorts the reader to “be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” HELPS Word Studies defines the word translated as “be renewed” (which is found only here in the New Testament) as to “make new in relation to time.” They note that “believers are reminded of God's continuous offer to bring new strides in their sanctification through ‘sanctified reasoning’ – raising the meaning *up* to *new levels of spiritual comprehension and reality.*”

This sanctifying renewal of the mind is something that we must work at. People who look to the Holy Spirit as the sole means of sanctification in this manner have misunderstood what it means to be a sound follower of Christ. We do not get an external injection of holiness as we walk in this life. Rather we are to actively pursue it through our own moral activity. The spirit referred to is “the higher life-principle in man by which the human reason, viewed on its moral side - the organ of moral thinking and knowing is informed” (Vincent’s Word Studies).

So how do we do what is necessary to be renewed in this way? Where does the knowledge for what we are to do come from? Obviously it is from a study of Scripture. It was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for our benefit. In other words, though we actively are to be renewed in this manner, it is the Spirit of God who passively participates in this process. Again, Christians err when they believe that all they need to do is snap their fingers and all of the benefits of the Holy Spirit will pour down upon them. Hence we have weak churches filled with weak Christians because study of the word is relegated to an afterthought instead of being our chief means of doing exactly what we are instructed to do.

Life application: Mature Christians will look for sound preachers and teachers to instruct them in the words of Scripture, and they will supplement what they have learned through their own

studies in the word. In doing so, they will have the right moral compass by which they can effectively renew the spirit of their mind.

...and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:24

In verse 22, we were told to put off the old man. If we do this, something must logically replace it. As he has just asked us to be “renewed in the spirit of your mind,” Paul now bolsters that thought with, “...and that you put on the new man.” In stating “the new man,” he is referring to being conformed to the image of Christ. The “old man” is the Adam in us with all of his weaknesses, failings, and corruption. The “new man” is Christ in us, anticipating that which still lies ahead, but which we can emulate even now. Paul refers to the contrast between these two in 1 Corinthians 15:46-49 –

“However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸ As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*.”

Although Paul speaks of this as future, that only means in the fullest sense. When we come to Christ, we move positionally to Christ. This is seen, for example, in Galatians 3:27 as well as in other passages from Paul’s hand. As we move in position from Adam to Christ, we are instructed to live now as if it is already fully realized.

This “new man” is plainly stated next as being “according to God.” Adam was created by God, but Adam disobeyed Him. In his disobedience, he was immediately spiritually disconnected from God (he spiritually died). He further was condemned to die physically; he took on the nature of corruption leading to death. Christ, in contrast, was perfectly obedient to His Father. In His obedience, His life was lived “according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” This is what we are asked to emulate now.

We have put on Christ and thus we are to live according to how Christ lived. This new life that we are to live will be further explained in the verses ahead. We are not just given an exhortation without explanation. Rather, we are given the overall picture of how we are to live, and then this is followed up with practical details which we can follow in order to live out our lives in a manner which is pleasing to God.

Life application: Paul’s words here are exhortations for us to live in a manner which is pleasing to our Creator. But just as important for us, they are given so that we can live without further troubles in our lives. If we follow the proper path, it is obvious that we will avoid many pitfalls

which could otherwise come our way. However, the only way to know this proper path is to read the map which leads us on it. Read your Bible.

Therefore, putting away lying, “*Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,*” for we are members of one another. Ephesians 4:25

“Therefore” is given as a summary of the previous few verses which provided the thought that “the truth is in Jesus.” Now, Paul admonishes us to (according to the Greek) “put away the lie.” Here, the abstract “the lie” is used to contrast truth which is found in Jesus. If we are in Christ, we are to emulate Him. The lie is incompatible with truth and therefore we are to put it away.

Instead, we are instructed to “*Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor.*” The term neighbor is referring to believers as is revealed in the next words, “for we are members of one another.” However, despite referring specifically to believers, lying is to be completely removed from our lives. We are to deal in truth at all times and avoid any hint of dishonesty. Jesus shows us in John 8:44 that lying is of the devil. We are to have no part of his wicked way, but are to fully and faithfully put on Christ and emulate Him.

Concerning the specific context of lying mentioned by Paul here, that of lying to members of the one body, it would be contrary for a hand to lie to the other hand. If a task needed to be accomplished with two hands, one of them would need the help of the other. But if the left lied to the right, the job could never get finished. If the eye saw a shoe waiting to be put on a foot, but told the foot that it didn’t see the shoe, then the foot would never receive its shoe and the happy time at the restaurant would be missed by the whole body. In other words, the body of believers is an interconnected whole. It is contrary to the aims of the body for one part of it to lie to another.

Life application: When a lie enters between two people, a bond of trust is ended. It is extremely hard to repair such a rift because a lie is so personal. If a person cannot be trusted with the truth, there is no basis for any true relationship at all. There will normally only be distrust from that point on. Healing such a rift can take an extremely long time, or it may never come about at all. Let us be careful to be honest in our dealings with others at all times.