

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, September 3, 2025 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

T H E B O O K O F

EPHESIANS

How to live the Christian life

EPHESIANS: HOW TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE – PART 29
“The Changed Life” - Ephesians 4:20-24

“¹⁷ This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ 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; ¹⁹ who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” – Ephesians 4:17-19 (NKJV)

“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.” -Ephesians 4:20-24 (NKJV) “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.” -Ephesians 4:20-24 (NKJV)

KEY BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR EPHESIANS

To gain a better understanding of the Book of Ephesians, consider the following background information:

1. **Authorship:** The Apostle Paul - Traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul.

2. **Date of Writing: A.D. 60-63** - Likely written around A.D. 60-63 during Paul's Roman imprisonment.
 3. **Place of writing: Rome** – Paul wrote the book/letter of Ephesians from a Roman prison
 4. **Audience: Ephesian Christians at Ephesus and surrounding area** Addressed to the Christian community in Ephesus, a major city in Asia Minor. Ephesians is considered a “circular letter” meant to be circulated to church in the area of Ephesus... possibly the same 7 churches
 5. **Purpose: How to live the Christian life** To strengthen the faith of believers and address issues of unity and spiritual maturity.
 6. **Themes: Grace, the church, and holy living** - Key themes include grace, the church as the body of Christ, and the importance of living a holy life.
 7. **Structure: Ephesus is divided into two main sections** - Divided into two main sections: doctrinal teachings (chapters 1-3) and practical applications (chapters 4-6).
 8. **Cultural Context: Ephesus was center of commerce and religion** - Ephesus was a center of commerce and religion, known for the Temple of Artemis.
 9. **Significance: Mystery of the gospel and inclusion of Gentiles** - Emphasizes the mystery of the Gospel and the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan.
 10. **Spiritual Warfare: Ephesians’ emphasis on the spiritual battle** - Concludes with a call to spiritual readiness and the armor of God (chapter 6).
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Application Questions

1. **If a person did not have a dramatic conversion, how can he know that he was truly born again? Cite biblical support.**
2. **If the “old man” is dead and removed at salvation, why do we still have such an intense struggle against sin?**
3. **What are some practical ways to be renewed in the spirit of your mind? Be specific.**
4. **How do lusts deceive us? How can we avoid this deception?**

When it comes to the subject of changing our lives, we all feel the same as we feel about going to heaven: We’re all for it, but we’d rather not go through what you have to go through to get there! The idea of change sounds good, but when it gets right down to it, we think, “You mean I actually have to *live differently*? No way!”

Why do people have such an aversion to change?

There are many different explanations for our apprehensions towards change. Psychologists have come up with multiple reasons for this mental conditioning, which differ depending on whom you talk to. Despite this, five factors seem to be consistent with most people. Whatever they are generally speaking, we don't like change

5 Primary Reasons People Dislike Change:

- (1) **Our fear of the unknown** - Not knowing what the outcome of something may be, or its effect, has never sat well with anyone. For the most part, humans are predictable creatures. We like routine, order, consistency and above all, plans. Change interrupts those things, and in turn, alters the end result and possibly the future. We have a hard time getting past that. This causes us to mentally recalculate, which typically provokes great stress and anxiety. For if we don't know what is going to happen, how can we plan for it?
- (2) **Our desire for control** - Who doesn't like to be in control of what happens in their life? Everyone does. Humans have always seen themselves as superior beings, the dominant species due to our mental advancement. Even among each other, our need for control is great, whether it be over our workplace, our household or our own lives. Therefore, any change that could potentially alter this is perceived as a threat, and we go into defense mode... and maybe even resistance mode. This manifests in various ways, but regardless, it goes against our nature to calmly accept any chance of a loss of empowerment.
- (3) **The status quo** - Society is all about status: where we are in the food chain, so to speak, how we fit in. Life's status quo is as important to humans as air. Why, I cannot tell you. A by-product of our need for control, maybe. Unplanned change sometimes disturbs this... the status quo, or causes us to believe it will. When we don't know where we stand in a situation, we become very uncomfortable, and fear rises. We much prefer the "status quo"... things to be as usual. We are more comfortable with this even if it is mundane.
- (4) **The ripple effect** - With a cognitive change, one can foresee a chain of events, including what may result from it and therefore accommodate them. Nonetheless, when something unscheduled happens, there is no knowing what effects it may have down the line. Like a drop of water in a steady pool, the ripples spread wide. This factor causes stress in us orderly humans. Too much change is going to change everything... this certain a fear of the change that takes place in the life of a Christians... I may lose friends, I'll have to change my lifestyle, this may affect my family relationships, I'm going to have to give some things up. That is a lot of change! Again, how can we plan or control a situation when we don't know what the full extent of the outcome may be? We cannot, which frightens us.
- (5) **"Old habits die hard"** - "Out with the old and in with the new," some say. But how many people actually like "new" situations in their lives? People are sentimental; we like familiarity in our jobs, neighborhoods, homes, socialization and daily routines. Change disrupts the flow. It takes us out of our comfort zone. We are forced to accustom

ourselves to new things, which makes us feel vulnerable, uncertain, incompetent or even helpless... awkward. These are feelings that no one likes to experience.

When Paul described the change that takes place at salvation, he said in a verse that we love to quote in 2 Corinthians 5:17, *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come”*

But Paul knew that after salvation all Christians have many thoughts and actions that they still need to give up, and many they need to take on. There needs to be a massive shift in thinking in many areas. Jesus faced the same challenge with the disciples.

➡ A. B. Bruce says of the disciples, *“At the time of their call they were exceedingly ignorant, narrow-minded, superstitious, full of Jewish prejudices, misconceptions, and animosities.”* These wrong ideas did not leave them at once. Peter, for example, after Jesus’s ascension to heaven, had to be jolted into realizing that Gentiles too could be saved through a vision and accompanying experiences. Jesus’s method of effecting change in the thinking of the disciples is instructive to us.

➡ Christian anthropologist Paul Hiebert explains that, *“The Biblical view of transformation includes both a point and a process; this transformation has simple beginnings (a person can turn wherever he or she is), but radical, lifelong consequences. It is not simply mental assent to a set of metaphysical beliefs, nor is it solely a positive feeling towards God. Rather it involves entering a life of discipleship and obedience in every area of our being and throughout the whole story of our lives.”*²

Some basic beliefs must change...

- Most people who come to Christ, whether from Christian backgrounds or not, previously depended on their good works to justify themselves... their thinking in that regard has to change
- They may take some time to understand the Christian teaching of salvation through grace mediated through the work of Christ.
- Some ingrained practices also must change... many people come to God because they see him as an answer to their problems.
- While they may have understood that coming to Christ includes a change of lifestyle, they may not realize how dramatic that change needs to be.
- This comprehensive change does not take place automatically, right after conversion. If we do not address these areas in people’s lives, there could be disastrous consequences.
- History is loaded with shameful examples of “born-again” Christians who have behaved corruptly when in power or have acted out in behaviors that ought not to characterize the life of a Christian.
- Such areas of unholiness must be addressed early in the life of a new believer.

There are three primary agents in the character formation or sanctification of a Christian. Within these three categories come several other means that God uses to change Christians.

Three Agents of Change:

(1) **The Word of God** - The first agent is Scripture, as is shown in Jesus's statements "*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth*" (John 17:17) and "*Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you*" (John 15:3). As we read the instructions of the Bible, we are urged to obey them, and resolving to do so, with God's help, makes us grow in holiness.

Being exposed to the Scriptures also exposes us to the nature of God. When we spend time with God in prayer and in the word, his nature permeates us, causing us to change without our even realizing it.

When I got to know Nancy and her family, they would use some expressions that I found strange (*Some, I can't share with you! [“What are ya'll doing in there playing Joe Bailey?”] But here is one I will share, [When eating, “Always keep one foot on the ground!]*). I would laugh when I heard these expressions. After a few years I found myself using the same expressions. It happened unconsciously. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being from the Lord who is the Spirit.*"

(2) **The Work of the Spirit** - The verse just quoted (in 2 Corinthians 3:18) introduces the second source of character formation... the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Christian character is described as...

- **Galatians 5:22-23** - "*the fruit of the Spirit*"
- **1 Peter 1:2** - Peter talks of "*the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ*"
- **Romans 8:13** - And Paul declares, "*If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*"

Sometimes this work of sanctification is attributed simply to God. Paul says to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "*Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" The life of holiness may involve giant leaps forward through powerful works of the Holy Spirit in what may be called crisis experiences. The apostles' experience at Pentecost is an example. Many Christians testify to a new level of holiness following a specific act of faith or surrender or rededication. But change generally takes place as a process.

➡ **Martin Luther** is credited with having described the growth of a Christian after conversion in this way, "*A person is rapidly declining in health because of a disease, and*

the doctors do not know its cause. Then the doctors correctly diagnose the disease and prescribe the appropriate medicine. He is not completely healed immediately upon starting to take the medicine. But from that point on, he improves until he is completely well. In the same way, after we experience conversion, there is a decisive turn in our lives, after which the movement is in the direction of holiness rather than sin and death.”

- (3) **The Fellowship of Believers** - The third agent in character formation is fellowship with other Christians. Paul says, in 2 Timothy 2:22, “*So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*” The writer to the Hebrews says in Hebrews 10:24, “*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.*” The flight from evil and the pursuit of holiness occur with the aid of other Christians. Under the category of fellowship, we can also include the disciplers and the discipleship groups to which Christians belong. It is in community with them that some of the most marked changes take place. In the chapters that follow, we will see how God uses means like prayer, worship, chatting, and teaching in community, along with the understanding and affirmation of friends, to help Christians to grow and experience healing from wounds.

There are at least three categories or kinds of change/transformation that take place when a person is saved.

3 Kinds of Change (or Transformation) That Take Place When a Believer is Saved:

- (1) **Cognitive Transformation** - First, there is *cognitive transformation*, where a person’s belief system changes. Certain facts about the gospel must be understood in order to exercise saving faith and to continue living the Christian life. We must believe these facts if we are to become open to receiving God’s salvation and growing. The preaching and teaching of the word and personal and group Bible study are among the means used in this kind of transformation. *Our minds believe the truth of God; our hearts experience the love and power of God; and our wills obey the ways of God.*
- (2) **Affective Transformation** - Second, there is *affective transformation*, where we personally experience God. He speaks personally and specifically to our situation, he guides and comforts us in clearly recognizable ways, he assures us of our salvation through experiences that affirm our identity in Christ, and he intervenes in our lives and the lives of people near to us in miraculous ways. We change as we learn about God through these experiences, and we experience new depths of love, joy, peace, and freedom from guilt.
- (3) **Evaluative Transformation** - Third, there is *evaluative transformation*, where we evaluate the beliefs and practices of the prevailing culture. Those in keeping with the gospel (like honoring parents) are retained with a Christian flavor, and those which contradict the gospel (like sexual indulgence, prejudice, and dishonesty) are rejected. It would be good for Christians to discuss these cultural factors and see how they square with biblical teaching. When my children were young, we would sometimes watch

television together and discuss from a Christian perspective what we saw in the programs and the commercials. So our minds believe the truth of God; our hearts experience the love and power of God; and our wills obey the ways of God. It is sad that individual churches usually major on one of these three kinds of transformation and do not give sufficient emphasis to the other two. How health-giving is a church that demonstrates God's commitment to impacting believers completely!

But the Christian life is fundamentally a changed life. If you claim to believe in Christ, but are living just as you did before you believed in Him, you need to examine whether you *truly* believe in Him. Becoming a Christian requires turning from your sin to God (repentance). But repentance is not a one-time event. It defines the lifestyle of a believer. God changes us radically at the moment of salvation by imparting new life to us, but this is followed by a lifetime of changing into the image of Jesus Christ. Again, Paul's words in **2 Corinthians 3:18** remind us, *"¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as ^[a] by the Spirit of the Lord."*

- Now again in the passage we were in last time, in **Ephesians 4:17-19**, Paul paints a grim portrait of how unbelievers live. While not all unbelievers are as bad as they possibly could be, they all live *"in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart"* (verses 17-18). That bleak picture describes each of us before we met Jesus Christ.
- But now in our passage in **Ephesians 4:20** Paul draws a sharp contrast, *"But you did not learn Christ in this way..."* He gives us a brief sketch of the changed life that every believer should be experiencing. He's saying in essence the follow which from the **"Key Thought"** for this study in **Ephesians 4:20-24**...

KEY THOUGHT: The changed life stems from the transformation that God works in us through the gospel as we put off the old life, are renewed in our minds, and put on the new life in Christ.

Paul is showing us in our passage (Ephesians 4:20-24) how the changed life begins and what that changed life in a Christian looks like... first, Paul shows the changes that God works in us through the gospel (4:20-21) and then he shows us how the process of changes works in our ongoing experience (4:22-24).

How the Changed Life Begins and What it Looks Like According to the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:20-24:

- (1) The changed life begins by coming to know Christ personally (Ephesians 4:20-21)**
- (2) The changed life requires putting off the old man (Ephesians 4:22)**

(3) The changed life requires being renewed in the spirit of your mind (Ephesians 4:23)

(4) The changed life requires putting on the new man (Ephesians 4:24)

THE CHANGED LIFE BEGINS BY COMING TO KNOW CHRIST PERSONALLY (Ephesians 4:20-21)

“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.” -Ephesians 4:20-21

Paul describes the changed life in four ways...

4 Descriptions of the Changed Life (in Ephesians 4:20-21):

(1) **The changed life begins when you learn Christ** - To **“learn Christ”** is an unusual phrase that occurs no where else in the Bible. Paul does not say, **“you did not learn *about* Christ,”** but rather, **“*you have not so learned Christ.*”**

“So learned” or *“learned this way”* refers to the way of unbelievers that he has just described. What does he mean, to “learn Christ”?

What does it mean to “learn Christ”?

1. **It means coming to know Christ personally** - He is saying that to become a Christian is a matter of coming to know Christ personally. Yes, you must know something about who He is, as revealed in Scripture. The entire Bible testifies to the truth of who Jesus is, that He is the Christ (Messiah, God’s anointed One), the Son of God. He is the eternal God in human flesh.
2. **It means knowing all that Christ has done for you** - You must also know something about the significance of what He did when He died on the cross as the substitute for sinners. He satisfied God’s wrath toward our sin, so that we are free from condemnation when we trust in Christ to save us. But it is possible to know all of these facts and more and yet not to know Jesus Christ personally.
3. **It means by faith receiving eternal life (salvation) through Christ** - In **John 17:3**, Jesus prayed, **“*This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*”** The Christian life begins when you receive eternal life from God through faith in Jesus Christ. At that moment, you come to know Him personally. Yes, that initial encounter with Christ is only the beginning of an eternal relationship with Him. But, if you have not entered into that personal relationship with Christ, you are not a Christian in the true sense of the word. You may be a theologian or a Bible scholar. But you are only like a historian who knows much about the President, but who has never met him or spent any time with him personally. The changed life begins when you learn Christ.

(2) **The changed life begins when you hear Christ** - Notice in **verse 21** Paul begins with the words **"If indeed..."** The words **"if indeed..."** does not express any doubt, but rather affirmation. Paul is saying, **"I know that you have heard Him."** Probably none of the Asian believers had heard Jesus in Palestine when He was on earth. None of them had had a personal encounter with the risen Christ, as Paul did on the Damascus Road. Rather, Paul means that when he and others had preached the gospel, these people had heard it as God speaking to them. God opened their deaf ears so that they didn't just listen to words, but they heard Jesus Christ calling them to Himself. They heard so as to obey His call to faith and repentance. In **John 8:43**, Jesus asks the Jews that were challenging Him, **"Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word."** He goes on to identify the root problem, that they were of their father, the devil. Satan had deafened their ears so that they could not hear Christ's words of eternal life in order to believe and be saved. The changed life begins when God opens your ears to hear Jesus Christ in the gospel and respond with obedient faith.

(3) **The changed life begins when you are taught in Christ** – Listen to Paul's words in verses 20-21 again, **"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."** The phrase "in Jesus" sums up Paul's view of what it means to be a Christian.

- As we saw in chapter 1, the saints are **"faithful in Christ Jesus"** (Ephesians 1:1)
- We have received every spiritual blessing **"in Christ"** (Ephesians 1:3)
- God chose us **"in Him"** before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4)
- **"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses"** (Ephesians 1:7)
- He made known to us the mystery of His will, which He purposed **"in Him"** (Ephesians 1:9)
- **"In Him"** we have obtained an inheritance (Ephesians 1:10-11)
- **"In Him"** we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (1:13)
- God's surpassing power towards us was revealed **"in Christ"** when He raised Him from the dead (Ephesians 1:20)

These are just the references to being **"in Christ"** in chapter 1 of Ephesians !

The blessings that are ours because we are **"in Christ (Jesus)"** keep piling up! So, to be **"taught by Him,"** means to be taught from the standpoint of this new relationship with Christ that entails this new position in Christ. Before, you stood outside, not understanding the things of God. But now, because of God's mercy and kindness toward you in Christ, you are **"in Him"** for time and eternity. To be taught in Him is a lifelong process that begins at the moment of salvation, but never ends. Since Christ is the center of all of Scripture, to be taught in Him is to grow to know the glory of Christ in His person, His offices, and His work on our behalf. Someday when we see Him as He is, we

will be instantly changed to be like Him (1 John 3:2). Meanwhile, we must engage in the process of being taught in Him.

(4) **The changed life begins when you know the truth that is in Jesus -** 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.*” -Ephesians 4:20-21 The phrase, “as the truth is in Jesus,” qualifies the preceding comments about learning Christ, hearing Him, and being taught in Him. The reason that Christ is the focus of instruction is that He is the embodiment of truth... remember these words of Jesus in John 4:6, “⁶ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” The truth of salvation is only in Jesus Christ.

- In Him, we learn the truth about who we are
- We learn about the truth about sin and righteousness
- And we learn about truth about God’s purpose for why we are on this earth.
- We learn the truth about how to love God and how to love one another.
- We learn the truth about the coming judgment, and about heaven and hell.

All of the truth that we need for life and godliness centers in the person of Jesus Christ. Note that Paul here makes a deliberate shift in how he refers to Christ. In verse 20, he talks about learning *Christ*, but here he says that the truth is in *Jesus*.

This is the only time in Ephesians that he uses the name Jesus by itself. Why did Paul not say, “as the truth is in Jesus.”?

- The change seems to be more than stylistic.
- The name “Jesus” focuses on the historical person who was born of the virgin Mary, who worked as a carpenter, and who walked around Israel teaching and healing the sick.
- He was crucified, raised bodily from the dead, seen by many of His disciples after the resurrection, and ascended bodily into heaven.
- All of these historic facts lie behind the name, “Jesus.”

But, why does Paul want us to think of the truth that is in *Jesus*?

Martyn Lloyd-Jones explains, “The Christian is not saved by a philosophy of redemption; he is saved by that historic Person, Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God!”

Some of the false cults talk about “the cosmic Christ,” or the “Christ principle within us all.” But that is just metaphysical mumbo jumbo!

As Martyn Lloyd-Jones points out, “All of the world’s major religions are built around teachings and ideas. But, in sharp contrast, the truth of the gospel is rooted in history.

The Christian message is the proclamation of certain facts that happened in history in the person of Jesus. If the gospel accounts are fictional stories, then there is no salvation in Jesus! If the historic person of Jesus did not die on the cross and rise bodily from the dead, as testified by many reliable eyewitnesses, then you are still in your sins (1 Cor. 15:17). *Everything* in the Christian faith rests on the truth being in the historical person of Jesus, crucified and risen from the dead!”

So Paul’s point in Ephesians 4:20-21 is that the changed life stems from the transformation that God works in us through the gospel. When we meet Jesus Christ personally through faith, we are changed people! But, how does the process continue?

“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.” -Ephesians 4:22-24

Paul goes on in Ephesians 4:22-24 to explain these changes with three infinitives (in Greek)...

3 Infinitives in Ephesians 4:22-24:

1. **“put off” = At the moment we trusted Christ, we did in fact lay aside the old life**
2. **“be renewed” = We began the process of inner renewal. But, day by day we must continue to put off the dirty old life and put on the new life in Christ, as we are renewed in the spirit of our mind**
3. **“put one” = At the moment we trust Christ, we didn’t only lay aside the old life, we put on the new life**

There are different opinions about how these infinitives function. In my opinion, the best view is that the infinitives explain the changes that took place when we trusted in Christ, but they also have the force of ongoing commands. At the moment we trusted Christ, we did in fact lay aside the old life and put on the new life, much as a baptismal candidate took off his old clothes and put on a new, white robe for his baptism. We began the process of inner renewal. But, day by day we must continue to put off the dirty old life and put on the new life in Christ, as we are renewed in the spirit of our mind. In other words, we must live daily in light of the truth of what God says we now are. We are new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Live each day in light of that truth by decisively putting off the old life, being renewed in your mind, and putting on the new life. Let’s look at each of these.

THE CHANGED LIFE REQUIRES PUTTING OFF THE OLD MAN (Ephesians 4:22)

“²² That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lust.” -Ephesians 4:22

- Paul’s phrase is literally, *“the old man.”*
- He identifies this as being “in reference to your former manner of life.”
- So the old man refers to all that we were before we were saved, when we were ruled by the evil desires and practices (see Ephesians 4:19; 2:3).
- Paul uses the same phrase in Romans 6:6, where he says, *“our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.”*
- Romans 6 is really a longer exposition of what Paul says more succinctly here.

In Romans 6 (and in Colossians 3:9), Paul refers to the putting off of the old man as an accomplished fact. When Christ died on the cross, we died with Him positionally. When He was raised from the dead, we were raised up with Him. We are to reckon these facts to be true in our daily practice, so that we will not yield to sin (Rom. 6:11). Because in those passages Paul clearly states this putting off of the old life as a done deal, some argue that it is not something that we have to go on doing now. They contend that it was a once and for all matter that happened at the cross.

But, although we died with Christ, in other places Paul commands us to put to death our members that are on the earth (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5, literal translation). Why do we need to put to death our members if we already died?

My understanding is that we must daily apply experientially the facts that are true of us positionally. So, yes, at the moment we got saved, we put off the dirty clothes of the old life. But, every day we must reckon that this is so by putting off everything associated with the old life and putting on the new life in Christ.

Lloyd-Jones (*ibid.* p. 123) uses a helpful illustration. When Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves, they were officially free from their many years of servitude, but some of them went on living as if they were still slaves. The President’s proclamation gave them legal standing as free citizens. It was a done deal—they were no longer slaves. But, out of habit and way of thinking, many of these poor people still lived like slaves. So, they needed to live in accordance with the new facts. When they were tempted to think like a slave, they needed to say, “No, the truth is I am now a free man!” They needed to appropriate that truth into their daily experience.

Even so, our old life involved a process of being corrupted by the lusts of deceit. Sin deceives us into thinking that it will give us freedom and fulfillment, but it's a lie. Sin only defiles, enslaves, and ultimately destroys the person who is deceived by it. When Christ saved us, He liberated us from bondage to sin. We died to sin by virtue of His death on the cross. We were raised to new life in Him. Now, we must daily put off the dirty clothes of sin and put on the new clothes of righteousness and holiness in Him, because He freed us. There is still in us a strong tug toward the old life, but we do not have to yield to it. The changed life involves putting off the old man.

THE CHANGED LIFE REQUIRES BEING RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND (Ephesians 4:23)

“²³And be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” -Ephesians 4:23-24

“Be renewed” is a present passive infinitive, which means that it is an ongoing process that God performs in us as we cooperate with Him (see Phil. 2:12-13). The renewing takes place *“in the spirit of your mind.”* God does the renewing as we obey Him by saturating our minds with His transforming Word of truth. So God's Spirit performs the work of renewal in us, but we are responsible to use the means of renewal, namely, His Word, which renews our hearts and thoughts as we submit to it.

Why does Paul here refer to *the spirit of your mind*? Why not just, be renewed *in your mind* (as in Rom. 12:2)? Some interpret “spirit” as the Holy Spirit, but the phrase, “of your mind” doesn't fit with this. The Spirit isn't a part of our minds. Others take it as the human spirit, but Paul does not use “spirit” in that way anywhere else in Ephesians. Some think that “spirit” is in apposition to “mind,” so that it means, “the spirit, which is your mind.” But, why would he say it that way? Others take it to mean, “the attitude or disposition of your mind.” Some say that it simply refers to your inner being.

Perhaps the best view is that it refers to the principle that regulates or controls the mind. In this sense, “the spirit of the world” (1 Cor. 2:12) is the principle that controls the world, or makes it what it is (Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* [Eerdmans], p. 264). Thus, the spirit of the mind is not just mental ability, “but the power that controls and directs the abilities” (Lloyd-Jones, p. 156). Paul means that our entire way of thinking and what controls our thinking needs renewal. We need to think in line with God's thoughts, as revealed in His Word.

This means that true biblical change must not bypass the mind. Sometimes, evangelists use emotional stories or music or a dramatic setting and then appeal to people to make a decision for Jesus. But they have bypassed the mind. Such decisions, made on the basis of emotions, will not last. God reasons with us through the truths of His Word. The doctrines of Scripture

make sense, because they are God's truth. When the Spirit of God opens a person's mind to the truths revealed in the Word, the truth will result in changed emotions and changed wills. Any change that bypasses the spirit of the mind will not last.

So, the changed life begins by coming to know Christ personally. It requires putting off the old life of corruption and deceit, and being renewed in the spirit of our minds. Finally,

THE CHANGED LIFE REQUIRES PUTTING ON THE NEW MAN (Ephesians 4:24)

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

Again, I believe that the sense is that we did put on this new man once and for all at the point of conversion, but we must continue putting on this new man every day by making true in our experience what is actually true of us positionally. In other words, we must live by applying the truth of the new man in every situation that we face. Paul will make this very specific in Ephesians 4:25-6:9. When you face the temptation to lie (the old man's way of acting), instead you speak the truth (4:25), because you are a new person in Christ. Instead of stealing, you work and give (4:28). Etc.

Note several things about this new man.

3 Things of Note Concerning the New Man:

- (1) **While Paul is applying it individually here, it also has a corporate aspect** - He used the phrase, “new man,” in Ephesians 2:15 to describe the church as the new creation of Jew and Gentile in Christ. Whereas the old man lived for self, the new man considers others ahead of self. Whereas the old man was full of racial prejudice and pride, the new man erases those distinctions and views others in the body equally as brothers in Christ. This corporate aspect of the new man implies that if you are not involved with a local church, where you are being built together with other believers, then you do not understand a major part of the new way in which you are supposed to live.
- (2) **God, Himself, is the creator of this new man** - As we saw in Ephesians 2:10, *“we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”* This shows that the changed life of the believer is not something that we must conjure up by our own will power. God created us anew in Him. But, at the same time, we must walk in the good works that He has prepared for us.
- (3) **God is the pattern of this new man** - It has been created (literally) *“according to God,”* or, as the NASB interprets it (in line with Col. 3:10), “in the likeness of God.” Specifically, Paul mentions “righteousness and holiness of the truth.” (Righteousness and holiness are aspects of God's character in Psalm 144:17 and Deuteronomy 32:4. See, also, Luke 1:75; 1 Thess. 2:10; Titus 1:8.) These qualities are essentially synonymous,

but righteousness refers to living according to God's standards, whereas holiness has the nuance of essential purity. Both qualities are the result of the truth, namely, the truth as it is in Jesus. In other words, the truth of sound doctrine results in holy living.

CONCLUSION

We don't all have dramatic conversion, as the apostle Paul did. Many of us that were raised in Christian homes may not know exactly when we came to faith in Christ. But no matter what our experience of conversion, we ought to know that God has changed our hearts.

What a Wonderful Change In My Life Has Been Wrought (*Shaped, Fashioned, Formed, Created*) = 3 Things We Were Formerly:

- (1) Formerly, we did not know Christ, but now we do, however imperfectly -**
- (2) Formerly, even if we maintained an outward veneer of virtue, we lived for self. Now, we live for Christ, to know Him and serve Him -**
- (3) Formerly, we were being corrupted by the evil desires of sin that deceived us into thinking that they would bring fulfillment. Now, we are new creatures in Christ, living for righteousness and holiness, which come from the truth that is in Jesus.**

While it is a lifelong process of renewal, you should be able to see the distinct difference between the old person that you were and the new person that you now are in Christ. You should be able to relate to the old Black preacher who said,

“I ain't what I want to be and I ain't what I'm gonna be, but praise God, I ain't what I used to be!”