



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

A New Standard of Living: *New Life for Old* (Eph 4:17-32)

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BIBLE STUDY

Ephesians

Location:

122 CAP

Time:

TUESDAYS @ 7:15 AM

EPHESIANS 4:17-32

“A New Standard of Living — Part II: New Life for Old”

Introduction

A new standard of living for the believer means putting “on the new self” (4:24). The believer is saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus (2:7-8). Salvation is “the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (2:8-9). As God’s workmanship, those who are “created in Christ Jesus” are to pursue “good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (2:10). For this reason, Ephesians 4:17 reads: “So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind.”

SALVATION IS “THE GIFT OF GOD; NOT AS A RESULT OF WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE MAY BOAST” (2:8-9).

Verses 17-19 indicate the state and practice of the non-Christian. Consequently, the believer in Christ is instructed not to live in such a manner. The reason is threefold: who Christians once were (4:17-19); who Christians now are (4:20-24); and, who Christians are to become (4:25-32). The non-Christian does not have the ability to understand spiritual truth (cf. 1 Cor 2:14). They are alienated and separated from God because their minds are blinded. Their hearts are not sensitive to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 7:14-25). When a Christian continually rejects obeying God’s Word (Scripture), he or she becomes calloused, and begins surrendering to sin, such as lust and greed (Eph 4:19).

The problem is that Christians “did not learn Christ in this way” (4:20). Therefore, it is incumbent for the believer to abandon the

“former manner of life,” which is under the control of the “old self” (flesh), and “put on the new self,” which is characterized by a new life of “righteousness and holiness of the truth” (4:22, 24).

In verses 25-32, there are five particular sins that the Christian is to “lay aside”—lying, angeriness, stealing, unwholesome speaking, and grieving the Holy Spirit—because we been “renewed in the spirit” and “put on the new self” (2:23-24). Scripture exhorts Christians to “lay aside” the sins that “grieve the Holy Spirit.” Christians are “sealed for the day of redemption,” which is the guarantee that believers will be entirely sanctified (glorified). The practices that grieve the Holy Spirit are to “be put away” (4:31), and replaced with those virtues that are qualities of being filled with the Spirit (4:32).

THINKING LEADS TO LIVING

(4:17-24) Verses 17-19 describe the condition of the unsaved Gentiles. Their thinking is futile, their understanding is darkened, they are strangers to God’s manner of life, their heart is calloused to the truth, they do not have any sensitivity because they are given to sensuality, and have greedily given themselves to every manner of impurity. Hardness of heart is manifested by futility of mind, which is the consequence of being “excluded from the life of God” and evidenced by “being darkened” in understanding. The consequence is that the unbeliever is “callous,” and given “to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness” (4:17-19; cf. Rom 1:18-32). The description in verses 17-19 is not only an accurate depiction of contemporary society, but also characterizes those vices that leaders of all types may approve.

WITHOUT THE ABSOLUTE STANDARD OF GOD’S WORD AND THE SENSIBILITY WITHIN SCRIPTURE, HUMANITY CAN DO LITTLE MORE THAN ACT IN CONFUSION AND LACK PURPOSE.

The sins that are approved by the non-Christian lead to futility. The loss of sensitivity by those given “to sensuality” (4:19), for example, is characteristic of sexual promiscuity. All should hold marriage in honor, and the marriage bed is undefiled (Heb 13:4; cf. Song 7:10-13). Those who become sated with licentiousness cease being able to appreciate or enjoy the blessing of marital intimacy. As an expression of the hardness of the heart (cf. Jer 17:9), foolish decisions are made by the public and government officials, in the “futility of their mind,” darkened understanding, and “ignorance that is in

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them” (Eph 4:17-18). Without the absolute standard of God’s Word and the sensibility within Scripture, humanity can do little more than act in confusion and lack purpose.

THE LORD’S DESIRE IS THAT CHRISTIANS HAVE A NEW STANDARD OF LIVING, WHICH IS CONSISTENT WITH GOD’S CALLING.

The reason why Scripture outlines the characteristic lifestyle of the non-Christian is so that those who are “alive together with Christ” (2:5) will be free from such actions. Note again the command of verse 17: “walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk.” The Christian life is contrasted with the non-Christian multitude. The Lord’s desire is that Christians have a new standard of living, which is consistent with God’s calling. Consequently (as believers), our business policies, home life, and social contacts must be examined by the standard of God’s Word, so we are able to “put on the new self” in all aspects. *Thinking leads to living!* It is therefore critical to understand who we are in Christ (chs. 1—3) so that we live appropriate to the gracious calling of God (chs. 4—6).

Having described the lifestyle of the unsaved Gentiles, the Apostle Paul stated, “But you did not learn Christ in this way” (4:20). Christ’s truth will never be contrary to Scripture (4:21). Therefore, if someone claims to be a Christian, yet walks “just as the [unsaved] also walk, we may legitimately ask, “Have you truly heard and believed the gospel of God’s grace in Christ?” For this reason, there is much emphasis upon learning (4:20) and teaching (4:21-22). Either failure to learn *or* to be taught the revelational truth of God’s Word will hinder the ability to “be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (4:23).

WE NEED TO BE REJUVENATED IN THE ATTITUDE OF OUR MIND, WHICH IS WHY IT IS CRUCIAL TO MAKE BIBLE STUDY A DISCIPLINE IN YOUR LIFE.

Habit is an inescapable aspect of life. Indeed, many of our actions are by habit (“second nature”). The manner of sinful thinking and behavior is habituated into us at birth; therefore, as Christians, we need to learn how to “lay aside the old self” (4:22) and “be renewed” (4:23) to “put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (4:24). We need to be rejuvenated in the attitude of our mind, which is why it is crucial to make Bible study a discipline in your life. In a sinful word, every blessing of God can be turned into a curse. Sinners learn how to quickly develop the capacity for all manner of habitual sinful responses. According to the truth that is in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (4:22), the Christian must “walk no longer” in accord with the sinful habits of the “old self.”

THINKING FOR CHRIST’S SAKE LEADS TO CHANGE

(4:25-32) The fundamental dynamic of the Christian life is to “lay aside the old self” and “put on the new self.” It is vital not to become cynical; rather, we need to *regard it as worthwhile to “put on the new self” for Christ’s sake.* If pleasing our Lord and Savior is not our ambition, then we will make no such efforts. Our attitudes must be renewed to replace the corrupting “lusts of deceit.” The “therefore” of 4:25 is strategic to indicate how thinking for Christ’s sake leads to change.

When is a liar no longer a liar? When he/she lays “aside falsehood,” which means the habitual action is replaced by the consistent standard of speaking truth (4:25-26). Truthful communication is essential because liars disturb any body of which they are a part (either the home, capitol, or church). To achieve such truthfulness we need to “put on the new self.”

There are times when anger is justified (for the sake of righteousness), yet one must guard against anger that leads to bitterness by letting “the sun go down on your anger” (4:26), which gives “the devil an opportunity” (4:27). A thief is no longer a thief when he/she is willing “to share with one who has need” (4:28). Christians must “let no unwholesome word proceed” from their mouth. The command is not only against profane speech but also that which is condescending. We are to speak words that are “good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear” (4:29). Our speech is to be appropriate, edifying, and gracious; if not, we “grieve the Holy Spirit” whose “seal” upon believers is indicative of His ownership and security of us (4:30).

In summary, all sins of the “old self” must be laid aside (4:31): “bitterness and wrath and anger” (cf. 4:26), “clamor” (bawling, bickering, disruptions), “slander” (blasphemy against God and/or others), and “all malice” (every sort of evil). Christians are not only to “lay aside” but also are to “put on” kindness (unselfish help), tenderheartedness (affectionate, compassionate, and sympathetic concern for others), and forgiveness (readiness to overlook offenses). God does not ask us to do something in which He has not already set the perfect example. The greatest example of forgiveness is God Himself, who forgives sinners on the basis of His grace and their trust in the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross of Calvary.

ABOUT CAPITOL COMMISSION

Capitol Commission state directors are pastors/missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come. With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God’s great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you. The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and to pray for their eternal salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.