

Legislators and Staff Invitation

Join us

Thursday, June 21st, 7:30 AM

**Prayer Breakfast
Legislators Cafeteria**

sponsored by Capitol Commission

Music, devotional, prayer

Capitol Commission Bible Studies are non-partisan, non-denominational. They meet weekly during session.

- **Legislator Only Bible Study** meets Wednesdays at 7:30 AM in the LOB Room 414. Contact Kathy Voss at Sandersonla@ncleg.net
- **June 19th - Legislators**, this is the last opportunity for a home cooked meal this session. You are invited to dinner at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Brad Harbaugh at 7 PM. We have limited seating, so please RSVP at info@capitolcom.org.

1. A Transforming Radical Relationship

Over the past weeks, our study in Ephesians has established that when the Apostle Paul wrote this letter, the culture in Ephesus was steeped in idolatry and immorality. People living there were led astray to lifestyles of destruction by counterfeit truth and counterfeit gods.

But truth changed lives. Our text today, **Ephesians 4:20-24**, declares that when Ephesians became Christians there was a change in their lifestyle. A change that moved them away from deceitful immoral behavior to living lives of honesty and integrity.

You hear of people breaking bad, but breaking good?

How does that happen? The text in these verses explains.

Ephesians 4:20–24 (ESV) *“But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self,*

created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

“Learned Christ” speaks of a decision.

This is a unique phrase. It is found nowhere else in the Bible or in Greek literature. We do not say “learn a person.”¹

The verb “learned” is, in a Greek verb tense, speaking of completed action at a point in time. The Greek word for “learned” is *mathanos*. *Mathanos* most common usage was to refer to “the process of learning.” But a second usage of the word, “to come to know” fits best with the verb tense that speaks of completion at a point in time.

This “come to know” speaks of the point in time when the teaching about Jesus brought them to conversion. Many commentators clearly point out that this phrase means “salvation,” specifically when the person became saved.²

The teaching of Christ by the Apostles presented Jesus as the promised Christ, evidenced by His death on the cross for the sin of the world and His resurrection from the dead. This teaching called the listener to repent and place His trust in the person and work of Christ to be saved from the wrath of God.

Jesus himself said, *“everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.”* **John 6:45** This coming to Jesus was explained as a point in time when one *“believes and has eternal life.”* **John 6:47**

Greek language experts agree that this verb tense refers to accepting Christ as Savior and as Lord. The result of salvation was a changed life. Jesus was Lord of their lives.

Ephesians 4:20 uses *manthánein* in the full sense of accepting Christ and his work with all its implications for life.³

This formulation signifies that when the readers accepted Christ as Lord, they not only welcomed him into their lives but also received traditional

¹ O'Brien, P. T. (1999). *The letter to the Ephesians* (p. 324). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

² Ephesians 2:8 “For by grace **you are saved through faith** and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God lest any man should boast.”

³ Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (p. 555). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

instruction about him...Learning Christ means welcoming him as a living person and being shaped by his teaching. This involves submitting to his rule of righteousness and responding to his summons to standards and values completely different from what they have known⁴

Conclusion: The point in time decision was accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord. This decision involved a supernatural transaction called redemption, being bought back by God and forgiven of all their sin, past, present and future.⁵ This redemption opened their eyes to the insanity of sin and the depth of God's love to rescue them from it. This rescue is described in the letter to Colossians as being spiritually moved from the "kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of [Christ] God's beloved Son."⁶

2. Three actions that follow a true Christian Conversion

There are three phrases mentioned in this section that describe action that follows a true conversion. The believer in Christ is exhorted "to put off," "to be renewed," and "to put on."

a. Shed what is dead.

The exhortation to "put off" refers to laying aside the old self that belongs to your former manner of life that is corrupt through deceitful desires.

The verb "corrupt," which in the active signifies to "ruin or destroy something," is used here in the passive to refer to the ongoing moral corruption of the "old self," a process of decay and ruin that finally ends in physical and spiritual death. The cause of this ultimate disintegration is the harmful desires which beguile men and women into sin and error. They have already been called "*the desires of the flesh*," characteristics of the old way of life in **Ephesians 2:3**. Now they are [described as deceitful. They lead people to a lost touch] with reality and lead to the destruction of the old man.⁷

Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome explaining the reason why a new believer is to remove this old self like a garment.

When a believer puts his trust in Christ, there is a spiritual uniting with Christ. The term, "*in Christ Jesus*"⁸ or "*being*

baptized into the body of Christ"⁹ is used. The Christian has spiritually died with Christ, was buried with Christ and arose with Christ so to have power to live the new life.

Paul stated the result of this union, "*We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*" **Romans 6:6**

The exhortation to "put off" is the call for the Christian to crawl out of that dead life. Paul describes that dead life as being corrupt because it could only respond to the call of deceitful desires and not to God's word. But now "in Christ" the believer has power to obey the voice of God and put off the old self. In Ephesus, this call meant worshipping the true God and turning away from the culturally acceptable but immoral lifestyle.

b. Be renewed in your mind by truth

Desires generated by **deceit** stand in opposition to the truth. So, the ongoing process of renewing your mind with God's truth is essential.

Again, Paul's letter to the Romans helps us comprehend this as an ongoing action of "*being transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God.*"¹⁰

When you hand a cashier a large bill, one of the first things they do is test it with a marker. The chemical in that special marker tells them immediately if it is real or counterfeit. The world system continually hands you counterfeit truth, and the counterfeits lead to big loss. This renewal of your mind gives discernment. It applies the marker of God's truth to clearly see the counterfeit of the world system.

c. Put on Christ

The act of initiation into the mystery religions of that day involved donning a robe. The Old Testament spoke about clothing yourself in righteousness and honor but this passage goes beyond that imagery to speak of putting on a person. Put on the "*new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*"

The new self is Christlikeness. The verses to follow in our continued study will reveal what the person in Christ looks like when He puts on the likeness of Christ.

⁴ Ibid. O'Brien, 324

⁵ Hebrew 10:14 "For He has perfected forever, those who are being made holy." Notice the complete sacrifice for all sins, the position of being righteous before God, and the growth of holiness in the life of the believer.

⁶ Colossians 1:13

⁷ Ibid. O'Brien, 328-329

⁸ Ephesians 2:13

⁹ Romans 6:3,4; I Corinthians 12:13

¹⁰ Romans 12:2