

**Monday, February 11th**

**Read Verses 4:20-24**

*<sup>20</sup> That, however, is not the way of life you learned <sup>21</sup> when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;<sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

In the remaining verses of Ephesians chapter four, Paul is drawing a contrast to what we read about last week regarding those who are unbelievers. It is a before and after picture. Paul is teaching once we step out of the darkness and into the light, we begin to see things differently. We no longer see things the way our eyes used to see them when we were blinded by our own ignorance. Now we have the ability to see things the way God sees them. First, Paul shows the changes that God works in us through the gospel in 4:20-21, and then he shows us how the process of changes works in our ongoing experience in verses 4:22-24.

Paul explains that to become a Christian is a matter of coming to know Christ personally. We must know something about who He is, as revealed in Scripture. We must also know something about the significance of what Christ did when He died on the cross as the substitute for sinners. It is possible to know all of these facts and more and yet not to know Jesus Christ personally. 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. 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. So, to be “taught in Him,” means to be taught from the standpoint of this new relationship with Christ that entails this new position in Christ. To be taught in Him is a lifelong process that begins at the moment of salvation, but never ends.

It is interesting to note, In verse 20, Paul talks about being taught in *Christ*, but in verse 21 he says that the truth is in *Jesus*. This is the only time in Ephesians that Paul uses the name Jesus by itself. 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.” 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. *Everything* in the Christian faith rests on the truth being in the historical person of Jesus, crucified and risen from the dead.

At the moment we got saved, we put off the dirty clothes of the old life. But every day we must be mindful to prepare ourselves by putting off everything associated with the old life and putting on the new life in Christ. Sin deceives us into thinking that it will give us freedom and fulfillment, but it’s a lie. Sin only defiles, enslave and ultimately destroys the person who is deceived by it. There is still a strong tug toward the old life, but we do not have to yield to it.

“Be renewed” is an ongoing process that God performs in us as we cooperate with Him. 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 and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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 work of the Holy Spirit will not last. The changed life of the believer is not something that we must conjure up by our own willpower. An unknown author’s words are relevant to this teaching, “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!”

Cole, Steven J. “Ephesians.” *Bible.org*, 2007, <https://bible.org/series/ephesians-0>.

## **Tuesday, February 12th**

### **Read Verses 4:25-32**

*<sup>25</sup> Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. <sup>26</sup> “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil a foothold. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.*

*<sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

The Bible is brutally honest in exposing the failures of some of the great men and women of faith when it comes to lying. Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Aaron, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Rachel and David all lied, along with Peter in the New Testament. If these saints struggled with being truthful, then none of us are exempt! We all need to take Paul’s exhortation to heart. *Truthfulness is important to God because He is the God of truth who hates lying and falsehood.* Since falsehood is contrary to God’s holy nature and is, in fact, a part of Satan’s rebellious nature, God hates it. *Truthfulness is important to God because truth is the basis for all communication.*

Paul goes on to name specific sins from our old life that we are to put off and godly behaviors that we are to put on. When Paul address anger, he is acknowledging that we all get angry, but we need to be careful so that it does not become sinful anger. We must be angry at the sin and injustice that we see in the world. But, in our anger, we must be careful, lest we fall into sin. Paul is saying - when you are righteously angry, deal with it promptly, carefully, and biblically, so the devil does not gain an opportunity in your life. For a guideline of rationalizing our thinking that our anger is righteous anger, think of this example: If we

would be angry and not sin, we must be angry at nothing but sin; and we should be more jealous for the glory of God than for any interest or reputation of our own.

While few of us would be tempted to pull off an armed robbery, if the situation is just right, it can be *very* tempting to take what does not belong to us. Paul doesn't go into any analysis of why people steal. He just says, "Stop doing it." As we put off our old life and but on godly behaviors, verse 28 implies several changes that are worthy of self-reflection; from selfishness to service; from taking to giving; from thinking only of my needs to thinking of the needs of others. From laziness to hard work; from deception to honesty; and from irresponsibility to responsibility. Our lives as Christians should reflect these changes.

Verse 29 is a verse that would bring radical change in all of our relationships if we would apply it conscientiously; Christians must transform their talk. Transformed talk is implicit in truthful speech, in righteous anger and in not stealing since stealing usually involves lying. Our talk is a major area where the Gospel will make a huge difference. Just as we can often tell where someone is from by their accent, so people should be able to tell that we are Christians by our transformed talk. Paul is saying that rather than using your words to tear down others, use them to build people up with encouragement.

Right in the middle of giving all these specific behavioral changes, Paul gives us the supreme motivation for why we should not sin, namely, that our sin grieves the Holy Spirit, who has sealed us for the day of redemption. Paul is saying, "God loves you far more than any earthly parent could. He has sent His Holy Spirit to live in you as His temple. Don't grieve Him by sinning!" That is the main reason *not* to sin.

Finally, we need to ask God's forgiveness and ask forgiveness of others we have sinned against. We can ask God for ways to show kindness to the offender and with His help be ready to forgive and restore the relationship. General Oglethorpe once said to John Wesley, "I never forgive and I never forget," to which Wesley replied, "Then sir, I hope you never sin. Because we all sin, we all need forgiveness and we all need to forgive, just as God in Christ has forgiven us."

Cole, Steven J. "Ephesians." *Bible.org*, 2007, <https://bible.org/series/ephesians-0>.

## **Wednesday, February 13th**

### **Read Verses 5:1-3**

*5* <sup>1</sup> Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup> and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

<sup>3</sup> But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Contrary to much popular thought, all people are not children of God. There is a general sense in which we all are God's children by virtue of the fact that He created us. But the Bible is clear that we become children of God when we are born into His family through a spiritual new birth. Today's reading is instructing us to imitate God as children who have been loved. Our love is to be a response to what God has done for us. We are to follow God

by loving others in the same way that He has already loved us. You've been loved so, pay it forward by walking in the way of love.

The Greek word for walk is *peripateo*...it literally means to walk around. *Peri* is where we get the word perimeter and *pateo* is this idea of moving. So what Paul is basically saying is, "move around". Love is our anchor, it's the tether point and everything we do is centered on this concept of love, so he says, walk around in love. In other words, it's not an act of love here and there. It's not an act kindness once in a while, love is supposed to characterize our lives. Our lives are supposed to be anchored to, tethered to, centered around love; making this way of walking our new normal.

To imitate God, we must know Him and His ways. We must learn about God, His ways and His character through God's written revelation to us, the Bible. And we must *submit* to God as He is revealed in the Bible. Thus, to imitate God, we must be His beloved children and we must know Him and His ways through His Word.

Our culture uses the word "love" for everything from, "I love pizza," to "I love my dog," to "I love my family." We cannot imitate God in loving one another unless we understand what God's love is. God's love is so ultimately complete it is difficult to define concisely. A brief description might be: God's love is costly, caring, committed and conspicuous, not just nice thoughts, but also evident deeds. God's love is and consecrating and committed to seeking the highest good of the one loved.

Our text also serves to introduce the subject on moral purity, as it contrasts God's way of love with the worldly way of lust. Paul starts a list of sins that illustrates trying to gratify our own desires and pleasures at other's expense. Paul is pointing out the opposite of imitating God is seeking to gratify our own desires and putting ourselves above others.

Cole, Steven J. "Ephesians." *Bible.org*, 2007, <https://bible.org/series/ephesians-0>

Smith, Craig. "Identity Theft Reboot." *Identity-Theft-Reboot - The-Sincerest-Form-of-Flattery*, 12 Feb. 2017, <https://bit.ly/2UHjzhi>

## Thursday, February 14th

### Read Verses 5:4-7

*<sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partners with them.*

God designed us in an amazing way! We are able to adjust to harsh stimuli by minimizing its effect on us. For example, our eyes adjust to bright sunlight so that it doesn't seem so bright or to a dark room so that it isn't so dark. Our ears filter out certain noises so that you don't even think about them. Our sense of smell and taste work the same way – not many of us like the taste of coffee at first. It is too bitter, but after we develop a taste for it, the bitter tastes good.

Our spiritual senses also work like our physical senses, but with a crucial difference. While it is to our advantage in most cases to adjust to harsh physical stimuli, it is to our disadvantage spiritually. When we first hear of some terrible sin, we shrink back in dismay and disgust. But if we are exposed to this sin repeatedly, it tends to become commonplace, we tend to accept it or at least shrug it off. However, we are to be different now as we put on our new selves. We might not have felt too bad about sin, but now that we are one with Jesus Christ, our mind is being renewed and our behavior should be increasingly God-pleasing.

In today's reading, Paul continues to talk about sins that satisfy us or makes us feel better in some way at the expense of other people. Then he brings up thanksgiving. He does this because being thankful leads to satisfaction, and satisfaction paves the way for sacrifice. When we are not thankful for what we have, we are wanting more, and we look for ways to get more. When we are not thankful, we are not in the position to be able to make the kind of sacrifices that Paul is encouraging us to do.

Unfortunately, we live in a world that argues against the kind of living that Paul is encouraging us to live. Paul says, "Hey I know you've heard of a different way of living. I know you hear it constantly in the world around you." But in verse 6, he goes on to say, "Let no one deceive you with empty words. For because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. In other words, you're going to hear arguments that say what I'm telling you is ridiculous. You're going to hear arguments every day that tell you this life of sacrifice that I'm calling you to it's absurd. It doesn't make any sense, it's unreasonable. You can't do this, you've got to look out for number one. You got to look out for yourself." The world says, "You can be charitable every now and then, you can do a kind thing every now and then but the idea that you would walk around being tethered to the idea of sacrificial love for other people, that's insane." And Paul says, you're going to hear those arguments, but they are empty words. There is no power in their words because the way the world is walking and telling you to walk is going to take you out of God's blessing. The world says if you really want to experience good things, you got to go out and get them. Paul is saying to the Ephesians, "If you want to experience great things you have to live sacrificially and in so doing you imitate God and you stay in his footsteps and you will find that you are blessed every step of the way."

God's wrath comes upon those who are disobedient. Self-seeking behavior ultimately leads to emptiness. As God's children, we are to walk weighty, leaving an imprint and influence wherever we go. Think of the people we will cross paths with today. We might be a reflection of Jesus to some who have been blind to the truth of God. The joy we have in Him becomes an expression of His presence in our life and evidence that our self-centered life is being transformed to our Christ-centered walk with Him.

Cole, Steven J. "Ephesians." *Bible.org*, 2007, <https://bible.org/series/ephesians-0>

In Touch Ministries. "The Christian's Walk." *Daily Devotion*, InTouch.org, 14 August 2018, <https://www.intouch.org/read/magazine/daily-devotions/the-christians-walk>

Smith, Craig. "Identity Theft Reboot." *Identity-Theft-Reboot - The-Sincerest-Form-of-Flattery*, 12 Feb. 2017, <https://bit.ly/2UHjzhi>