

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for November 18, 2018

Out with the Old, in with the New
Ephesians 4:20-24

I. Regeneration (4:20-21)

20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!— 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,

- These verses are strategically looking backward in order for the Ephesians to identify and remember where the change began for them
- Of course, as is the case for any believer, their transformation began at their conversion
- First, notice the three verbs that jump out at us in verses 20-21
 - “Learned Christ... heard about (Christ)... taught in (Christ)”
 - All verbs are descriptive of salvation
 - Similar to Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20
 - Make disciples or make learners by going, baptizing, and teaching
 - Paul is stating that true change has salvation, regeneration, or rebirth as its starting point
- Second, notice how Paul reminds the Ephesians of their introduction to Christ in verse 20
 - He states, “But that is not the way you learned Christ!”
 - Paul played a vital role in the process of the Ephesians’ conversion
 - Thus, Paul is in a good spot to remind the Ephesians of the terms of their conversion to Christ
 - The Ephesians were not taught that they could come to Christ and remain in the old ways of their sin
- Third, notice how Paul spells out their conversion in verse 21
 - He states, “assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him”
 - ESV - “assuming that you have heard”
 - NASB, NET, NKJV - “if indeed you have heard”
 - NIV - “when you heard”
 - Paul addresses how the Ephesians both “heard” about Jesus and were “taught” in Jesus
 - First, the Ephesians heard about Jesus when people like Apollos, Priscilla, Aquila and Paul came into town preaching about Jesus
 - Thus, the Ephesians heard about Jesus’ life and ministry
 - The Ephesians heard about Jesus’ sacrificial death upon the cross for their sins

- The Ephesians heard about Jesus' resurrection and ascension into heaven
- The Ephesians probably also heard about the highly anticipated return of Jesus to earth
- The Ephesians heard about Jesus—who He was and what He did
 - Second, the Ephesians were taught in Jesus
 - The Ephesians were taught Jesus' standard of holiness
 - The Ephesians were taught Jesus' call to forsake all in order to follow Him
 - The Ephesians were taught Jesus' requirement of repentance for those who would believe in Him
 - The Ephesians were taught in Jesus—how to respond to Him
- Fourth, Paul recalls how these past events gave them access to the truth
 - Paul says that you heard about Jesus and were taught in Jesus because “the truth is in Jesus”
 - The truth is powerful
 - The truth sets us free (John 8:32)
 - The truth of God's Word sanctifies and changes us (John 17:17)
 - When the Ephesians were enlightened with the knowledge of Christ, they had been shown the one and only way, truth, and life (John 14:6)
 - In understanding the truth in Christ, the Ephesians were equipped to change
 - The process of their change began at their conversion to Christ

II. Removal (4:22)

22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,

- After regeneration/salvation/conversion, true change requires removal of our old self
- Paul states that part of their teaching in Christ was for the Ephesians “To put off your old self”
 - The word “put off” is a fitting picture
 - “To strip away, as in taking off old, filthy clothes.”¹
 - True change requires a removal and discard of the old self
 - The “old self” is directly connected to who the Ephesians were apart from Christ
 - Likewise, the old self is who we were before we met Christ
 - Additionally, we must acknowledge that our old self or our flesh still tries to overtake us even now as those who are in Christ

¹ John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1810.

- “‘The old self’ is an expression of community identity—all were once fallen and dead in their transgressions and sins (Eph 2:1–2), but it also refers to the vestiges of that identity that remain in each individual. These sinful traits need to be stripped off; their influence needs to be defeated.”²
- Paul knew he wanted to serve God with his mind but still felt his flesh drawing him back into sinful ways (Romans 7:25)
- Paul also stated that the deeds of the flesh are at war with the Spirit of God at work in us (Galatians 5:17)
- Why does true change require a removal of the old self?
 - We have already seen the obvious reasons for doing so since the old self is at war with the truth we have been taught in Christ
 - Paul elaborates to make sure that the Ephesians understand why the old self must be abandoned and put off
- Paul describes our old self as that “which belongs to your former manner of life”
 - Our old self is the version of us prior to conversion
 - Why would we try to hold onto it?
 - We already remember the truth of that lifestyle from Ephesians 2:1-3 and 4:17-19
 - Spiritually dead and Satanically influenced
 - Enamored with the world and darkened in understanding
 - Separated from God with calloused hearts
- Paul further describes our old self as “corrupt through deceitful desires”
 - The old self was and is a corrupting flesh
 - This corruption comes from the deceitfulness of sinful desires
 - “Sin itself is a deceptive power (Rom 7:11). The serpent’s deception of Eve illustrates this well (Gen 3:1–7, 13). The deceitful power of sin stands in opposition to the truth that is in Jesus (4:21b).”³
 - Romans 7:11 “For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.”

III. Renewal (4:23)

23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,

- Paul reminds the Ephesians that they were taught “to be renewed in the spirit of your minds”

² Clinton E. Arnold, Ephesians, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 287.

³ Clinton E. Arnold, Ephesians, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 288.

- True change requires a renewal in our minds and a rewired way of thinking
- The mind needs time to be renewed after years of thinking incorrectly
- Notice that this renewal is stated in a passive manner
 - “To be renewed”
 - This suggests that something must act upon our minds to cause renewed thinking
 - This must be the Holy Spirit and the Word of God
 - Since sanctification requires the truth, the Christian must flood his or her mind with the truth
 - This truth is the Word of God and the understanding of the Word of God comes from the Spirit of God
- The Christian walk is a battle of the mind
 - Joshua 1:8 “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”
 - Romans 12:2 “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”
 - Colossians 3:9-10 “Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

IV. Recreate (4:24)

24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

- “And to put on the new self”
 - Clothing imagery again, put off and now, put on
 - Must replace old self ways with new self ways!
 - “One cannot be a Christian and a non-Christian at the same time.”⁴
 - 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”
 - 2 Corinthians 3:18 “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”
 - Galatians 5 - Fruit of the Spirit
- “Created after the likeness of God”

⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 610.

- Romans 8:29 “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...”
- Ephesians 4:13 “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,”
- “In true righteousness and holiness”
 - Righteousness - Christian’s moral relationship to fellow man
 - Holiness - Christian’s moral relationship to God
 - “The new person is directly opposite of the old person whose desires and lifestyle have their source in deception.”⁵
 - Old self - Deceitful desires
 - New self - True righteousness and holiness
 - “Whereas the evil desires that typified the old self stemmed from deceit (τῆς ἀπάτης; genitive of source; 4:22), righteousness and holiness stem from the truth (τῆς ἀληθείας; genitive of source). This process ties in with his previous assertion that ‘there is truth in Jesus’ (4:21b).”⁶

⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 613.

⁶ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 290.