

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Off with the Old, On with the New, Part 2

Scripture: Ephesians 4:19-24

Code: 1929

As we have been doing on these Sunday mornings for the last several months, I invite you to look with me at the book of Ephesians. What a rich and rewarding and wonderful study it's been, and is yet to be, as we go through these final three chapters. Ephesians, chapter 4, and verses 17 to 24, will be our text for what we want to say to you this morning – Ephesians 4:17. I'm going to read it to you so it will set it in your mind, and you follow as I read, and then we'll share concerning what it teaches.

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former manner of life the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

One of the most wonderful passages in all of the revelation of God is found in 1 John, chapter 5, verses 4 and 5, and serves as a fitting comparison to our text for this morning. First John 5:4 says: “For whatever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” To believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and by such faith to be redeemed, to be saved, to be transformed, means that you become an overcomer of the world. The word overcomer simply means victor; it is the Greek word *nikao*, from which we get the Nike missile. It means “to conquer,” “to have victory,” “to be superior,” “to overcome.”

And one of the basic realities of salvation is that it transforms a loser into a winner; it transforms a victim into a victor; it makes us overcomers - that by very definition. Do you remember the words of our Lord, who said in John 16:33, “In this world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; for I have overcome the world.”? In other words, as we enter into Jesus Christ, we enter into His overcoming of the world. We rise above the system, we rise above the evil age, we rise above Satan as conquerors of the devil himself, we rise above death as those who can cry with Paul, “O death, where is thy sting?” We rise above sin as we hear the echo of the words of Romans 6: “Sin shall have no more dominion over you.”

We rise also above the world, the whole system of Satan, as overcomers. And so as Christians we have risen above the evil age, we have risen above the system of Satan. Our citizenship is heavenly, and we are consequently to live as heavenly citizens, we are to live as overcomers. Paul even goes further than that, and calls us not only *nike*, “overcomers,” but *hupernike*, “hyper-overcomers,” “super-overcomers.” And your Authorized Version translates that word “more than conquerors.” So it is basic, then, to salvation that it is an overcoming transformation; that it lifts us out of the mundane; that we die to the old and we rise to the new; and we are risen with Christ to seek the things that are above.

We are the possessors of a newness of life, the possessors of a new nature. We have the potential to live out a new man, a new lifestyle, a new walk. That’s what Paul is after. Chapters 1 to 3 describe the newness in the inside, and chapters 4 to 6 describe how that newness ought to work on the outside, what ought to happen as we live - the conduct, the pattern, the behavior - the way we operate in our lives. And by giving us a contrast, Paul really approaches this theme – the contrast in verses 17 to 24 between the old and the new; the old man or the old lifestyle, and the new lifestyle; the old walk, and the new walk. You’ll notice, in verse 17, he says: “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk.”

Your lifestyle is to be different. As a Christian, there are differences. You have been, according to chapter 2, “Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath foreordained that you should walk in them.” That’s to be a difference, from the old way, from the old walk, from the old man. God saved you unto newness of life. He saved you to be different, to be transformed. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” In 1 John, chapter 5, it tells us that we have overcome; on the contrary, in chapter 5 of 1 John, and verse 19, it says: “The whole world lies in the lap of the wicked one.” There’s a big difference.

The world as we know it is coddled by Satan; we have risen above, to the very presence of God. We aren’t like the Gentiles. Paul describes the heathen or the *ethne* here and 1 Thessalonians 4:5 in this way: he says, “The Gentiles who know not God.” We are not numbered among those who know not God. When we come to Jesus Christ, we’re different, we are changed, and our lifestyle is to match that new nature, that transformation. This is basic, people, to the whole of Christian living, and you know that. You’ve heard it many times, and Paul is reiterating it here, I think, in terms that maybe you haven’t thought of before. Let me show you what he’s saying.

He describes an old way of life and a new way of life, and says, “This is the way you are to live, in the new way of life.” He compares an old man and a new man. Now, the old man and the new man are not talking about your nature in this passage. Some places in the Bible they can be broadened to include that, but here he’s talking about your lifestyle, your old lifestyle as opposed to the new. There’s to be a tremendous difference. Now, remember this: the key to the difference is the way you

think – Do you remember that from last week? It's the way you think that makes the difference; the old lifestyle with a certain thinking process; the new one with a different thinking process.

That's why verse 23 says that salvation demands that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind. There is a new thinking process demanding of a new creation, and the Lord actually begins that process in the transformation of salvation. Now, let's look back at the contrast again, as we started to in our last study together. Verses 17 to 19 describe the old walk and the old man, verses 20 to 24 the new walk and the new man. I want to review just briefly. Now, you'll remember back in chapter 2, verses 1 to 3, that we are told that sinners walk according to the world, the flesh, and the devil. They function according to those three things. Now, here we see an illustration of how that works out.

You walk according to the world, the flesh, and the devil, and this is what will happen, and he gives us four characteristics of pagan thinking and lifestyle, four things based upon wrong thinking. One is in verse 17, and this is the first characteristic of an unregenerate, unsaved person who doesn't know God. First, at the end of verse 17, "they walk in the emptiness of their mind," and the first characteristic is what I called self-centered emptiness. The unregenerate man resolves everything on the basis of his thinking, his mind. It is his mind that is ultimate; it is what he thinks, what he acquiesces to, what he agrees with, that makes the difference. The only problem is that he will follow his mind to emptiness, because it is vanity, it is useless, it is aimless, it is pointless, and it is purposeless.

Self-centered emptiness is characteristic of our age, it is characteristic of an unregenerate man – he's going nowhere, full of sound and fury, but signifying absolutely nothing. It's perhaps echoed in the song of Jackson Brown, who's a current rock star, who sums up life in this way: "I'm going to buy myself a house 'neath the shade of a freeway. I'm going to pack my lunch and go to work every day, and when the evening sun goes down I'm going to lay my body down, and when the morning light comes streaming in, I'm going to get up and do it again." That's just about it. A useless life produced by a vain, empty mind. If a man operates on a mind that doesn't have God's thoughts, and all he's got is his own thoughts, it's going nowhere, it's useless, it's empty, and it's vain.

Second thing: where there is a useless, empty, and vain mind, there will be ignorance of the truth, and that's the second characteristic of a godless person in verse 18. "Their understanding is darkened; they are alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that's in them, and because of the hardness of their heart." That word is "hardness." In other words, when a person says, "I will live and die on the basis of my own mind. I will be the master of my own fate, I will be the captain of my own soul, I will be the determiner of my own destiny," you can be sure he's going to live his whole life in ignorance, because man doesn't have any answers. If he cuts himself off, in verse 18, from the life of God, if he alienates himself from the life of God, he tears out any possibility of ever knowing the truth.

And so the second thing is a willful darkness; spiritually he is dead, incapable of knowing the truth. And we showed you last time, implied in this verse is the terrifying thought that when a person makes a willful choice to base everything on his own mind, and he becomes his own god, and he turns his back on the true God, that after a certain point, God just lets him go. The Old Testament put it this way: God said, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." Romans 1 says, "God gave them up." He let them go. If a person chooses this, after a certain point, God lets them go. At the end of the Book of Revelation, chapter 22, and verse 11: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." God lets them go. Let it be. And so, to start out with, a useless, self-centered mind can only result in ignorance, and such ignorance as dives deeply into sin.

And that leads to the third thing: shamelessness, shamelessness; verse 19: "Who being past feeling." You can stop right there. Well, listen – if you cut yourself off from the life of God, you will be past feeling any conviction, you will be past sensitivity to sin, you will lose sensation of regret, you will be beyond the reality of shame. When you desire to live by your own mind, and you cut yourself off from the life of God, you cut yourself off, then, from the truth of God, and without the truth, you do not have any standards, you do not have any morals, and your life will deteriorate into a shameless degeneracy.

We see it, don't we, in our society? A society that's going to do everything its way; consequently, it cuts itself off from God, and once it does that, it has no standards, and then indecency runs wild. And that's exactly what we have; there's no base of morality. The term here translated "being past feeling" means "to be callous," "to cease to feel pain," or "to cease to care." Self-desire is all they feel, that's all the sensation there is, and they're going to get what they want, whatever the cost. And then another thing results – when you go to live by your own standard and your own mind, in the uselessness of your own mind, you cut yourself off from God. Therefore, you lose all moral sense, all moral balance, all sense of what's right and wrong, and you do that which is shameless.

And the result is you wind up with a fourth characteristic, and that's a reprobate mind, a mind that ceases to function. You have literally seared your conscience. You have burned out your mind, you have torn out of your brain the standards that God has placed there, you have violated conscience to the place where conscience can no longer function. "Being past feeling," it says, "they have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Now that's human lifestyle; not very pretty, is it? Shameless thinking will destroy the mind. All right, now, let's go back over it very quickly so you understand it.

You start out with doing your thing your way. You think your own thoughts and determine your own destiny. You've cut yourself off from God. As a result, you're going to live in ignorance – that's verse 18 – your heart's going to be blind; your head's going to be blind. As a result of that blindness, you don't know any morality, and without a morality, you will become shameless and indecent. And you

live in shamelessness and indecency long enough, and it burns out any thinking process you have left, until you come to the place where you totally give yourself over to lasciviousness, and you work uncleanness with greediness. In other words, you can't get enough vileness in your life; you can't dig up enough filth.

Now, I saw a restaurant in Hollywood – I went down there one day – and it's called Filthy McNasty's. I thought, "Now, that just about describes this whole section of town." Now, let me look at this word "lasciviousness" with you for a minute. "Lasciviousness" is the word *aselgeia*, and I told you a little about it last week. I want to just enhance it a little. It is probably the ugliest word in the New Testament; it's a filthy, vile word, and it's used very often. Here is the essence of *aselgeia*: it is the person in whose soul dwells so much sin, under such total domination, that he doesn't care what anybody says, he doesn't care what anybody thinks, he doesn't feel any shock, he has no sense of decency, and absolutely no sense of shame.

Now, this word rarely ever occurs alone; it usually occurs with other words. In fact, let me give you an idea about that. Three times *aselgeia* is connected with drunkenness: in Galatians 5:19, 1 Peter 4:3, and Romans 13:13. In those three passages it is connected with drunkenness; it is connected with a particular word, *komos*. *Komos* originally was sort of a harmless word. It meant - it referred to a band of friends who accompanied a victor in the games on his way home, sort of like his pals, his buddies.

But as time went on, and they were going on their way home, they were laughing and cheering and celebrating the victory, they began to drink. And they became ribald, and they became carousing, and reveling, and wildness. And it degenerated into some kind of sheer self-indulgence in a public fashion; it literally means "brawling in drunkenness." And the *aselgeia*, the person who is lascivious, is one whose sheer self-indulgence knows no public restriction. He doesn't restrain himself at all in regard to people. It's connected with that kind of ribald drunkenness.

Secondly, four times this word is connected with adultery or lust and sexual sin. In Mark 7:22, 2 Corinthians 12:21, Galatians 5:19, and 2 Peter 2:18, it is connected with sex sin, and in each case it has reference to a person who has no more shame than an animal in gratifying his sexual desire. That's where *aselgeia* fits; it is the kind of lasciviousness that knows only its fulfillment, even if it's an animalistic thing. An *aselgeia* person has no more conscience about immorality and about sexual gratification than a dog. That's the word. So three times it's connected with ribald drunkenness, four times it's connected with a degenerate kind of sexual lust that knows no difference than an animal.

And three times – here's a third time it's used – three times it is used with *pleonexia*, and it's used with that here. *Pleonexia* is the word "greediness" in this verse, and three times it is used with such an uncontrollable lust that people don't even know the bounds of it. It's the kind of thing where if you don't give me what I want, I'll rape you to get it, see. It's that completely out-of-control greed. It's not some nice little isolated inner attitude; it is an evil, vile lusting for that which is wrong to the point

where it's public, to the point where it has no more decency than an animal does. And it has absolutely zero shame, and it's so greedy it just wants to get itself fulfilled in such a manner that it is never able to be satisfied.

It's the madness of drunken, sexual, brawling indecency. That's the way the Gentiles live. And you know where it all comes from? You say, "Well, not everybody's gone that far." Yes, but nobody in human society has any resources to restrain themselves from going that far. It is only by the grace of God, that falls on the just and the unjust in general in society, and the preserving influence of the Holy Spirit, and the preserving influence of the church in the world that keeps anybody from not ending up at the pits at that level.

Because that's where it all goes; you start out with a self-centered mind, think your own thoughts. You cut yourself off from God, which means you're ignorant, and in your ignorance you've got no morality, and so you begin to live like an animal. And once you get into lust, lust is the most damning thing there is, because it knows no limits, and it has a decreasing sense of satisfaction. And that's the way it is, shameless, vile, violent, illicit, ambitious, greedy lust. This is the way the world is. In Romans 1:29, the word *pleonexia*, "greediness," shows the sin of a godless world as they turn their backs on God to fill their desires. In Luke 12:15, the word *pleonexia*, "greediness," is the sin of a person who evaluates life only in material terms; he can't ever get enough goodies.

In 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2, and chapter 4, it describes a person who uses his greediness to take advantage of other people; it's the man who doesn't care what the woman is like after he gets done raping her; he'll do it anyway. In Colossians, chapter 3, *pleonexia* is identified with idolatry, because it is greediness to worship an idol rather than the true God. And in passage after passage after passage, it's connected with sexual evil. It's the desire to have what is illicit, it's the desire to have what is forbidden, and it's the desire to have it so bad that you have no conscience, no decency, no sense of shock, and you'll trample and destroy anything and anyone that gets in your way. This is a mindless lifestyle.

You say, "Well, how do people get there?" We've got them all in our society; there are lots of them, believe me, all over the place. And there's nothing to restrain anybody who's unregenerate from going that far, nothing within themselves, nothing, and believe me, there are going to be more going to this limit than ever before. You read your Bible, "Evil men shall grow" – What? – "worse and worse" as we get closer to the time of the Lord's return. There are going to be more and more and more people like this, especially after the church is removed, and the influence is taken away, and, in 2 Thessalonians, "the one who hinders doesn't hinder anymore." This thing is going to become an absolute inundation of human society, as if it isn't already.

You say, "How do people get like that?" Verse 19 says, "have given themselves over." They give themselves over to it. Listen, I told you last week. I'm going to say it again, and then I'm going to

illustrate it. It is a matter of constant, willful choices. A choice made often enough becomes a habit, and a habit reaps a personality, and a personality reaps a character, and a character reaps a destiny - that's exactly what happens. It's a series of choices. They have given themselves over. Sin is something you can't blame on anybody but yourself. You make repeated wrong choices, a choice makes a habit, and a habit makes a personality, and a personality makes a character, and a character determines a destiny.

Let me illustrate it to you. Last week, Bob Vernon, of the Los Angeles Police Department, in our church here, gave me a book called *The Criminal Personality*, written by two Jewish researchers, Samuel Yochelson and Stanton Samenow. It has become almost like a Bible to the people in law enforcement, analyzing criminal behavior. This is a result of 15 years of clinical study on criminals; it's two volumes of over a thousand pages. And what is most fascinating to me is that, for years and years and years, criminality was based on environment. Criminality was a result of behavior induced by circumstances - the kind of place you lived, or what your mother did to you, or your father did to you. But after all their research, this is what they say - most interesting.

The thesis of the book is that criminal behavior is a result of a warped thinking process. "As a man" - What? - "thinketh in his heart" - What? - "so is he." In fact, in three sections of volume 1, page 251 to 457 - over two hundred pages, three whole sections - are devoted to, quote, "The thinking errors of the criminal." Now, listen - they say, quoting, "Abandoning the search for causation, and deciding not to work with feelings, we probe the criminal pattern of thought," end quote. In other words, they said, "Let's find out how a criminal thinks," and that's what opened up the whole thing.

And this was their conclusion: it is remarkable, quote, "the criminal often derives as great an impact from his activities during non-arrestable phases as he does from crime. The criminal's thinking patterns operate everywhere; they are not restricted to crime," end quote. In other words, from the beginning to the end of a criminal life personality, there is a thinking process that is out of whack. Do you know what that is? That's a reprobate mind. That's just Romans 1, and they're just now discovering it. It's a thinking issue. It's not environment; it's a reprobate mind; it's a mind that is no mind.

Policemen have told me, time and time again, "You cannot predict what a criminal will do." Why? Because the normal capacity of the mind doesn't work that way. In endeavoring to explain the criminal mind, which God would call a non-mind, a reprobate mind, the researchers say this: "Sociological explanations have been unsatisfactory." It isn't sociological. Quoting them: "The idea that a man becomes a criminal because he's corrupted by his environment has proved to be too weak an explanation." Now listen to this - a shocking statement: "We have indicated," quote, "that criminals come from a broad spectrum of homes, both disadvantaged and privileged; within the same neighborhood, some are violators, and most are not."

Now listen: “It is not the environment that turns a man into a criminal. It is a series of choices that he makes starting at a very early age” – right on. Do you want to hear something interesting? They say, in some cases, you can begin to detect it at the age of three – choices – choices. Listen, the heart of a child is a rebel. You’d better get the rod and drive it out of him, because if you don’t, no question in my mind, Satan has selected out certain human beings in our society to begin early that thinking process that will bring them to the place of being the most reprobate of all society, to drag the whole of society to hell. You’d better deal with it.

They went on to say, perhaps most important, is that the material in this chapter has demonstrated that a criminal is not a victim of circumstances. He makes choices early in life, regardless of his socioeconomic status, race, parents, child-rearing practices. Changing the environment does not change the man; it’s a reprobate mind you’re dealing with. It’s so fascinating to me that down the pike some people come up with the things God’s been saying for centuries. The researchers said this: eventually the criminal decides that everything is worthless. His thinking is illogical. Well, the point of all of this, people, I’m just trying to show you, is that a man becomes what he is, a woman becomes what she is, by a series of processes of thinking, choices he makes.

You say, “Well, how did that person ever get to be like – made a choice, and another choice to do the same thing again, and it became a habit, and it became a personality, and it became a character, and it’s a determined destiny?” And at that point, God says, “Let them go” – a reprobate mind. And you know something else I thought interesting? Last week I mentioned to you the word “work” here is the word *ergasia*, that’s sometimes used of a business. Isn’t it interesting how these people are so vile and so filthy, that they make filth into a business – they make it into a business. They work uncleanness; they make a business out of uncleanness. And they’re greedy; they use it to get money.

You might be interested to note that there was an article in *Forbes* magazine somebody gave me, a lead article, entitled, “The X-Rated Economy,” by James Cook, and I thought it was very interesting. I’ll tell you what it said. “Pornography is no longer an illegal business. The market for pornography is not confined to perverts or other emotional cripples; to the contrary, the largest part of the market is middle-class people. In an increasingly permissive society, those who do enjoy pornography are free to revel in it.” Now, here’s something that really shocked me; according to the California Department of Justice, the nation’s pornographers do a \$4-billion-plus-a-year business. Do you know that that is more than the movie industry and the music industry combined? Pornography.

And by the way, according to one west coast police department, that is only one third of the real business; it’s closer to \$12 billion a year. Skin magazines circulate 16 million copies a month, and generate a half a billion dollars a year in revenue. Adult films – get this one. Those triple-X and those weird little deals where they have these things, 780 of those film theaters in the United States showing those rotten things; listen to this – 2 million people per week go through the door, at \$3.50 a

head, or nearly \$400 million dollars a year. Another \$100 million goes into what are called sex toys, but the biggest of all are the little book shops where you get the dirty books and look at the little peep shows, whatever they are. One of them in New York takes in \$10,000.00 a day.

The Los Angeles Police Department estimates in our city there are \$125 million annually put in the little peep shows and the book shops. It's a business, people; it's beyond anything we could ever imagine. Al Goldstein, one of the porno kings in our country, said, "It's a high risk business, but my lawyers make as much money as I do. Harassment from the law doesn't do anything. It just cuts the profit margin a little." And right in the middle of it is a man who claims to be born again – don't you believe it.

Listen, people – that's the old life, and that's what it'll go to, and that's what it's gone to, and you see it, and I see it. But that's the old thing. The apostle Paul says, Hey, listen – "you," verse 17, "walk not as the other Gentiles walk." That's not our life, that's not our lifestyle, that's not where we're coming from. And I'll tell you something, if when you came to Jesus Christ, you didn't recognize that that stuff had to be cut off, then I don't know whether you were really saved. If you're still hanging onto that thing as a way of life, I question your salvation, because James, chapter 4, and verse 4, says, "Friendship with the world is enmity with God. You adulterers and adulteresses, don't you know that if you're a friend of the world you're the enemy of God?"

If, when you came to Jesus Christ, you didn't make a conscious cut from the system of this world, I question whether your salvation was genuine; I question it. If you didn't have an overwhelming sense of your sinfulness, so that you cried out to God for mercy, and the evil that was in your life, you wanted it washed away, I question whether you're a Christian. First John 2 says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the things of the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Right? It's not there. Now, when you became a Christian, you, if you really were saved – and I think there are a lot of people who think they are and they're not, and there are some right in this church like that.

But if you really came, and you were really saved, then you consciously cut the cord with the world. Now, it keeps coming back and waltzing you from time to time, and that's what Paul's talking about here; don't let it do that. But when you were a Christian, you had to realize you were a sinner, and you were taking a break from the world, and you were making a cleavage with the system. You can't be an immoral, ungodly person, and just come along and accept Jesus, and never change your lifestyle, and tell me it's real salvation; it isn't. I heard a guy on the *PTL* the other night, and he said, "It's so wonderful," he said, "it's so wonderful you don't have to change anything on the inside and you don't have to change anything on the outside when you come to Jesus."

That's a lie right out of hell. If you think that's a ministry, you're wrong; that's diabolical. That's going to send more people on the broad road to destruction than it'll ever get on the narrow way to

salvation. There better be a change. The world has its whole lifestyle, and it's not ours. This is the way they live: they live with their own minds telling them what to do; they live in ignorance; they live without a sense of decency; and they live in a greedy quest to fulfill their lusts – not us. And when you came to Jesus Christ, that was what you recognized; your life was going to be different. Oh, it's not always easy; that's why Paul says we can't live that way, we can't walk that way. We're different; that's not our lifestyle.

Look with me for a minute at Acts 2:37, Acts 2:37. Peter preached a sermon. I mean he really preached a great sermon on the day of Pentecost, and it had a tremendous effect, the people were just really shaken. And it says in verse 37, "When they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts." And they were under a tremendous conviction, "and they said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In other words, how do we get out of this mess we're in? They realized they had to do something different than they were doing, right? Nobody ever got saved who didn't realize he had to do something different than what he was doing. He said, "The first thing you do is repent." Listen, I believe with all my heart that nobody can come to Jesus Christ unless he repents.

The first thing Jesus said when He came into the world, He said, "Repent, for the kingdom is at hand." You start there. Paul says, in Acts 20, that he "preached repentance toward God, and then faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance. He says, "Repent." You've got to make a conscious turn from the world, from your sin, from the evil things. Well, look at now what he went on to say: "Be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Christ for the remission of sins." You see, sin's all involved; you've got to recognize that. And then you say, "That was the end, just repent of the past, and go." No, verse 40, did you miss it?

"And with many other words did he testify and exhort." You say, "What did he say?" I'll tell you what I think he said. He said, "I'll tell you something else. You've got to cut yourself off from this world, you've got to see a change in the life you're living, you've got to turn your back on your sinfulness, you've got to walk a holy walk." He may have given John's message, "You need to be one who confesses his sin, you need to be one who loves the brethren, you need to be one now who continues not in sin, if this is real." But he kept on exhorting, and he kept on testifying; he gave us more instruction. It wasn't just that little quickie thing.

To sum it up, he said this: "You better save yourselves from this crooked generation." Listen: nobody gets saved who doesn't realize he is repenting of personal sin and making a cleavage between himself and the present generation. Do you get the point? That's basic. And you can't come to Christ on any other terms. If you came to Jesus Christ thinking all you had to do was believe, and didn't have to confess your sin and realize what it was, and didn't have to cut off from this evil world, you missed the point. You know, there are some people whose lives haven't changed one bit since they supposedly believed in Christ.

They were living with somebody they weren't married to, and they're still living with them. They were acting immorally, and they're still acting immorally. They were committing adultery, and they're still committing adultery. They were committing fornication, and they're still committing fornication. And my Bible tells me in 1 Corinthians that fornicators and adulterers do not inherit the kingdom of heaven, period. If that's still your lifestyle, I question your salvation. That's what he's saying. If you really were saved, hey, you made a conscious break. If you really were saved, you cut it off from the world. Now, you're not going to go back and do it again. That's the way they live, not the way we live. We don't walk that way.

Now, let's look at that second part, the new walk, and this is just going to take a minute, because we've set it up so you'll see the contrast. Paul saw the pagan system. He saw men's hearts petrified so they were unable to know sin. He saw them so dominated by sin that shame and decency were lost. He saw men so much at the mercy of their desires that they didn't care who they destroyed as long as they were gratified. He saw reprobate minds that were useless, shameless, truthless, graceless. "That was the old walk," he says, "let me contrast it with the new walk." Again I say, we're different, people; we've got to be different. We've got a different kind of mind, see. We don't have that old kind of mind; we've got a different kind of mind, we think different now.

Peter calls it, in 2 Peter 3:1, "a pure mind" – great term, "pure mind" – a renewed mind, a transformed mind (Romans 12). Now, what are the characteristics of this in contrast to the old? Well, the old - first contrast - self-centered, useless; the new, Christ-centered, purposeful. Look at verse 20: "But you have not so learned Christ, if so be that you have heard him." Listen, the one thing that a Christian knows from the very beginning is that he doesn't do what his own mind tells him. He learns Christ. Christ acts through me. Christ loves through me. Christ serves through me. The life that I live is not mine, but Christ lives in me.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," Philippians 2:5. "As I have done unto you, so you do to one another." "Love as Christ has loved us." "If any man say he abide in Christ, he ought so to walk even as He walked." We walk like Christ, think like Christ, love like Christ, and serve like Christ. I get all my impulses from Him. I didn't learn Christ to walk in the vanity of my own mind. When I learned Christ and heard Him and was taught by Him, it was to follow Him. So the first great difference is the unsaved person walks in the vanity of his own mind, and the saved person walks according to the mind of Christ – big difference.

I really can say to you, from the depths of my heart, that I want more than anything in my life to do the thing that Christ wants me to do. Do you feel that way? I just want Him to work through me. Jesus said that one day - to those who were around Him in the Gospels - He said, "Learn of me." "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." And because of that, it's not useless; it's purposeful. God has a plan of destiny for the universe, and as long as Christ is working in me, He's

working out a part of the reality of that plan; it's purposeful. And so that my life counts, "I am able to do exceedingly abundantly above all I can ask or think, according to the power that works in me." That's purposeful, isn't it? Not useless.

Listen, I don't just go buy me a house in the shade of the freeway, and lay down at night and get up and do my little thing again every day. I'm not just going in a cycle. Every day to me is a fantastic adventure, because I'm right in the middle of God's unfolding plan for the ages. I have purpose in life. And so he says, The first thing is you have a Christ-centered purpose, not a self-centered emptiness.

Second thing: instead of being ignorant of the truth, like they are in verse 18, you know the truth. Look at verse 21: "You have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." You know, when you give your life to Christ and you say, "Christ, You rule, and You are the Lord" – and by the way, you can't become a Christian until you recognize that. I think there's no way to become a Christian without acknowledging that Christ is the Lord. And so when you give Him your life, and you say, "Rule my life," then you fall under the truth, and rather than being ignorant, you know the truth. Oh, the quest for truth, men are after – that's, you know, that's the most traveled road in human history, trying to find the truth. People get cynical. Pilate says, "What is truth?"

I saw a lady in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, this summer, that had a T-shirt on that said, "I have abandoned my search for the truth." There must be a lot of people in that category if somebody's making T-shirts like that. There must be somebody to sell them to. But when you became a Christian, and Christ acts through you, and Christ loves and serves through you, then you're going to know the truth. The truth is in Jesus. Second Corinthians 11:10 says that. It says, "As the truth of Christ is in me." Oh, what a great thought. Paul says "the truth of Christ is in me." Chapter 5 of 1 John again, and verse 20, closes out with a great word. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

And if all of that truth is in Him – "Little children" – for goodness' sakes – "keep yourselves from idols." There's certainly no information to be had there; it's all in Him. So first of all, we learn Christ, and then we know the truth. Secondly: the truth about God, the truth about man, the truth about sin, Christ, creation, death, life, forever, history, relationships, salvation, happiness, purpose, meaning, heaven and hell, faith, grace – we know the truth about all that. And because we know the truth, and because Christ thinks through us, instead of being shameless, instead of having no morality, instead of having no basis for life, we are sensitive to sin.

Verse 22 – we are called to "put off concerning the former manner of life the old man, corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Instead of not knowing what corruption is, boy, we sense it in the smallest doses, don't we? There's nothing as miserable as a sinful Christian - wretched people to be around. You say, "How do you know?" I've been there; it's terrible. See, we know what it is to be

corrupt. We know what it is to see the result of deceitful lust. We're sensitive to sin. There's no flaunting indecency. There's a deep sense of sin, and that's why the beatitude we'll study tonight is so clear to us: "Blessed are they who mourn; for they shall be comforted." You see, the real subjects of the kingdom are those that mourn over their sin. They don't gloss it over.

Look at 1 John: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive" – What? – "ourselves, and the truth isn't in us." If we say we have no sin, we make God a liar, but if we confess our sin, then we give evidence that we are the ones who are really being forgiven, because a true Christian will acknowledge sin and be sensitive to it. Paul was never so sensitive in his life to sin as after he became a Christian. "O, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" That wasn't one experience in his life; that was a way of life as long as he lived. He could cry, "O, wretched man that I am" from the moment he was saved till the moment he was glorified. That wasn't one experience; that was a way of life. So we are sensitive to sin; we face it; we deal with it; we put it off.

Now, let me go to the fourth point. You learn Christ, and when you learn Christ, He fills you with His truth, and when you have His truth, you have a moral sensitivity, and so sin is a hated thing. And as long as you have Christ's truth, and you know what is right and you know what is wrong, then you're going to have not a reprobate mind but a renewed mind. Verse 23: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" – the only time in the New Testament *ananeoo* is ever used. It means "to create again," "to make new." When you become a Christian, God gives you a new mind, but you've got to fill it with new stuff. That's why Philippians 4:8 says, "If there be any virtue, if there be any praise" – Do what? – "think on these things that are pure and just, holy, good report, honest."

And so a renewed mind, not a reprobate mind. When you let Christ think through you, you'll have a standard of truth. That standard of truth will give you a judgment on sin, and it'll renew your mind to be the kind of mind that pleases God. What kind of mind? Verse 24 – it will be a mind "created in righteousness and true holiness." Instead of being a reprobate, vile, lascivious, greedy, unclean mind, it'll be a mind filled with righteousness and a mind filled with holiness, and when that's true in your mind, that's the way you'll live. "So be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man" – the new mind; the new thinking process that results in righteousness and holiness.

And so what's Paul's message? To sum it up it's this: verse 22, "Put off the former manner of life, the old man"; verse 24, "Put on the new man." Listen, when you came to Christ, you said, "I'm a sinner; I forsake it. I am a member of the world; I forsake it." And now that you've been a Christian, isn't it awful that Satan dangles the world and sin in front of you, and you go back to it? He says, "Don't do that. Put it off. Put it off and put on righteousness and true holiness." And by the way, can I add this as I close? This is not something you do once for all. This is something you do every day you live. You say, "Where's my resource?" Two things, simple.

One is the Word; one is the Word. For the Word of God, “All scripture given by inspiration of God, is profitable for” – Watch this – “doctrine, reproof, correction.” You want to get your life corrected? Expose yourself to the Word of God. It’ll help you deal with your sinfulness. It’ll help you deal with the traces of the world. The Word of God will reprove you; it will correct you. And the second thing is prayer. If we are the ones confessing our sins, then we are the ones that are being forgiven. Let the Word of God expose it, and let prayer be the catharsis that cleanses it. Shall we pray?

Father, we thank You that You never lowered the standard, but You gave us the Spirit, the Word, and prayer to meet the standard. We wouldn’t want a God with shifting standards. We want an unchanging God, because then, and only then, can we count on You. Thank You that we can. Lord, we’re so thankful that You took us out of the old, and You gave us the new. You made us new creations in which all things have become new. Father, thank You for the word of the apostle Paul, that if we are new, we ought to live new. God, help us to cut the cords with the old. We have no place with that.

In fact, as we read our Bible, it’s questionable - if that’s a habit of life - whether we’re even saved. And we may be on the broad road that leadeth to destruction, thinking all the while we’re Christians. What a tragic delusion. So Father, help us to really deal with the fact that we’re different, and live it that way. And Father, as the world gets worse and worse, may we not drift with the world; may our goodness never be relative, but ever absolute. May our righteousness and holiness never be relative, but ever absolute, for Your glory, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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