

Ephesians, Part 9

Paul is continuing to address the way that believers walk. He is concerned that every believer grow up into Christ in every way. We were just shown that there is not just a possibility but a provision for us to grow up in all things into Christ. This potential is a direct result of our abiding in Christ and His abiding in us. It is a progressive work of forming us into the image and likeness of Christ. We were just instructed to achieve a degree of maturity and function that is in harmony with the Head, even Christ. Christian perfection is described as walking worthy of our calling, and living in such a way that individually we bring glory to Him. When we accomplish that, every part of the body of Christ (the church) will achieve full function and nourish, love and minister to the other parts of the body.

The new life in Christ

We are called to walk in the new life that is in Christ. Although we are in the world, we are not to live or walk like the world. Our walk among the world will be a living testimony of the power of Christ in us. As the world sees how we live in every situation of life, Christ will be glorified. Although we are “*in Christ*” and are members of the “*body of Christ*,” we are also in the world. Although we live in the world, we must not be of the world. We are told to put off our old life, ways and manner of living. This almost appears to be a contradiction. If our lives are truly being lived in union and fellowship abiding in Christ, how can the world have influence over us. The world is filled with sin, Satan’s influence, temptations and defilements. Due to the connection we have with Christ, we have a responsibility to be a witness of the light in a dark world by the manner in which we live. We must not allow the world to defile us. Those who are in Christ must have a complete separation from their old way of living, their past life. This new life in Christ affects every aspect of one’s personal life and human relationships. We should no longer live as the world lives. When we come to Christ, there should be a corresponding change in our way of living. To help us with this new life in Christ, we are shown what the old life was like.

The Worldly Walk

Ephesians 4:17–18 NIV84 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Several characteristics of the life without Christ are listed in verses 17-19.

They walk in the futility of their thinking.

“*Futility*” suggests being without a useful aim or goal, devoid of truth, perverse, depraved. This is characteristic of their minds.

Romans 1:21 NIV84 For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as

God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Here in Romans, *“the invisible attributes of God are clearly seen by the things He made.”* Their *“thinking”* is a result of a darkened understanding. Since their minds are darkened because they believe lies and have not received the truth, they practice all manner of evil. The futile mind refuses to accept the things that God has clearly revealed and because of the darkness that prevails in their inner being, they practice all manner of evil.

Romans 1:28 NIV84 Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

What does it mean to have a darkened understanding?

Wrong is right and right is wrong and everyone is given over to their own understanding and values. We notice this in the ideas of relativity. Everyone is left to their own truth and nothing is absolute. When humanity forsakes God, they are plunged into darkness that impacts their understanding of the truth.

2 Corinthians 4:4 NIV84 The god of this age has *blinded the minds of unbelievers*, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

This is the reason for every evil being practiced in the world. The lack of understanding and improper thinking has made them ignorant of God and His ways. Futility of mind and a darkened understanding is countered by the glorious light of the Gospel and receiving Christ, the Light of the world.

Ephesians 4:19 NIV84 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

This lack of sensitivity is referred to in 1 Timothy 4:2 when it talks about having the *“conscience being seared with a hot iron.”* When this happens people become past feeling. This is brought about by a constant rejection of God and developing a hardened heart. They become spiritually dead. This lack of sensitivity leads to giving oneself over to sensuality to indulge in every kind of impurity. We must all guard ourselves against losing sensitivity to God. At one time we all lived like that gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts, (*Ephesians 2:1–3*)

Why do the people of the world act the way they do?

They walk the way they do because they do not know the truth and have

surrendered themselves to do all kinds of sin and impurity. All manner of evil, indecency, sexual sin, lewdness, and greediness is involved in this darkness. Jesus addressed this in Mark 7.

Mark 7:21–23 NIV84 For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’ ”

1 Peter 1:14 NIV84 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

Look at the last phrase of this verse.

Ephesians 4:19 NIV84 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, ***with a continual lust for more.***

This is the insatiable lust and greediness of a life that has an appetite for sin.

The new man (4:20-32)

The Christian life is radically different from the old life. The change that has come upon us as a result of our union with Christ has dramatically changed the way we walk or live. We all should experience these changes. These changes impact our lives in many ways.

The Believer’s position (4:20-24)

Ephesians 4:20-24 NIV84 You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 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; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

“Put off the old self” (vv. 22–23, 25)

The believer is to put off the self-centered desires. Self-centered desires promise joy and fulfillment but fail to provide that. Rather than the self-centered life, we are called to a Christ-centered life. Christ becomes life and everything that is needed.

“Put on the new self” (v. 24)

The new self is created to be like God in righteousness and purity. As the Christ-centered life is developed we are enabled to bring glory to God in everything.

Believers have been made new in the attitude of their minds.

The darkness and ignorance of their old thinking and understanding has been taken away.

2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Believers are new people in Christ Jesus. This newness of life is a direct result of our vital connection with Christ. We are not only drawing life from Him, He is living His life in us.

Galatians 2:20 NIV84 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

The old life that we did live has been done away, put off, and the new life has been taken up. God has done His part; it remains for us to believe what He has said and *“change clothes.”* The instruction Jesus gave concerning Lazarus applies to each believer: *“Loose him—take off the grave clothes—and let him go!”* It is not enough simply to die to the old life; there must also be resurrection and the manifestation of the new life. We put off the *“grave clothes”* of the old life and put on the *“clothes of the new life in Christ.”*

The Believer's Practice (4:25-32)

We are a part of God's new creation (Ephesians 4:24; Ephesians 2:10) and therefore we walk in newness of life (Roman 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Speak the truth (v. 25)

Ephesians 4:25 NIV84 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

If we belong to the truth, how can we indulge in lies? Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44) and Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, (John 14:6). Lying involves every form of dishonesty. Believers are to speak the truth, (v. 15) because we are members of one another in Christ, (vv. 4, 16).

In your anger do not sin (4:26-27)

Ephesians 4:26-27 NIV84 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

We may legitimately become angry, yet we should not sin. Don't allow anger to control our actions. The wrath of man never brings about the righteousness of God (James 1:20). Deal with anger before the sun goes down. We should not allow malice, wrath, envy, hatred, or passion. Don't give the devil an opportunity to lead you into sin. It is possible for a Christian to

give the devil a foothold or a place in their life. We can do that by allowing sin in any form to take root in our lives and hinder fellowship with God or other believers. It is easy to blame Satan when we have given him a foothold. Don't yield to sin!

Replace stealing with giving (4:28)

Ephesians 4:28 NIV84 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

A thief takes from others for his own benefit. The believer is to work, doing something useful with their own hands so that we may minister to others who have need.

Change the way we talk (4:29-30)

Ephesians 4:29 NET You must let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth, but only what is beneficial for the building up of the one in need, that it may give grace to those who hear.

We must be careful about what we think and say. Unwholesome words should not come out of our mouths. The word for "unwholesome" describes what is foul, putrid, decaying or rotten. Unwholesome refers to content and attitude. Our words should be true and pure with the purpose of benefiting others. Unwholesome words bring damage to others and one's own soul.

Matthew 12:34 NKJV How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Psalms 19:14 NKJV Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.

Psalms 141:3 NIV84 Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.

When unwholesome words come from the lips, there is corruption in the heart.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit, (4:30)

Ephesians 4:30 NIV84 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

This verse may seem out of context to some, but it addresses what is going on in our inner man. If evil thoughts, anger, hatred, etc. are active inside we will grieve the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can be grieved by wrong behavior. This is one of the reasons we must guard our lips, our heart, and our actions. Since the Spirit has sealed us (1:13-14); we should not grieve Him by

allowing sins of action and attitude to be in our lives. You will immediately know if your thoughts or actions have grieved the Holy Spirit if you have not seared your conscience by continually practicing evil.

This section concludes with some things we should get rid of.

Ephesians 4:31–32 NIV84 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

There are six behaviors that we must put away.

- **Bitterness** – resentment, envy
- **Rage** – outburst of anger
- **Anger** – a feeling of intense anger that does not subside
- **Brawling** – shouting or clamor
- **Slander** – blasphemy, abusive words to damage one’s reputation, falsehoods,
- **Malice** – ill will, spite, hostility, wickedness

Replace these with these three commands.

- **Be kind** – this is the opposite of being harsh, stern or severe. Be easy going.
- **Be compassionate** – this is tenderhearted. Be good.
- **Be forgiving** – forgive on account of your own good will.

We should freely give grace as Christ forgave us. The reason behind this behavior is God’s actions toward us.

Ephesians 5:1 NET Therefore, be imitators of God as dearly loved children