

The Christian Life
Part Two
Eph. 4,5

Introduction:

Last week we began a little mini-series that I have entitled The Christian Life. Contained within the book of Ephesians, chapters 4 and 5 we have a little guide-book, a thumbnail sketch of what the life of a true believer is to look like within the fellowship of a local church.

We looked at:

I. **The nature and design of the local church.**

And,

I. **The Purpose of the Ministry**, including the place and function of the spiritual gifts.

I might add that we had a wonderful follow-on discussion in the evening service concerning these matters.

If you missed the message and would like to ‘catch up’ it is on the church’s web site and can be easily accessed by most.

Today we come to the part of the manual that applies to the personal life of the believer as it pertains to his behavior both within the church and with those on the outside.

I. **The Personal Life of the Believer**

These principles concerning the nature of the church, the ministry, and the spiritual gifts being laid out, Paul turned to the details of godly living and gave a fairly exhaustive exhortation concerning how believers ought to conduct themselves as the “walk worthy of the calling.”

- 17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,**
18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:
19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

As a general guiding principle, the believer should recognize that the behavior of the child of God is to be vastly different from that of those people who make up the unconverted world around him.

Their behavior, the unbelievers, Paul says, is guided by vanity of mind, darkened understanding, alienation from God and blindness of heart. When he said that they were ‘past feeling’ he

meant that they were calloused toward God, no tenderness of affection and an insensitive conscience that did not register fully the wickedness of their behavior.

By the way, if you haven't noticed, Evangelical Christianity in our day has a sizable population who are of a vain mind, are mostly blind to the call of God to holiness, and are calloused toward sin. This is the reason that there is little difference between the lives of the church going population and the rank unbelievers.

It is not coincidence that our so-called Post-Christian era in the west is marked by an increase of brutality of behavior in many. We read almost weekly of elderly people beaten, sometimes to death, in a robbery that could never possibly have been worth more than just a few dollars.

We see politicians with such little conscience that we routinely expect them do lie. And lie they do. The approval ratings, based on confidence levels, of our politicians is at an all-time low. And yet, in the vanity of their minds, they strut themselves before us as saviors from the very messes that they have created. You know, it is a pretty good job if you can get paid for failing to solve problems, lying about your responsibility in it and then get paid to fail at solving your own self-created problems.

But the 'vanity of mind' and 'darkened understanding,' the 'alienation from God' and 'blindness of heart' is not just a problem for the street thugs and the politicians. It is a matter that strikes at the very heart of Evangelical Christianity. What once was a time of worship is now a time of entertainment for many. And the time that once was spent in profound, godly, studious messages from the Word of God is now taken up by motivational speeches that bear little resemblance in their content to the teachings of the Bible.

And, beyond that, many individual Christians now resent any teaching on personal holiness that challenges their shallow and casual approach to being a Christian. They don't want to hear about duty to God and they certainly do not want to hear about their sins. This is a far cry from where the church started out.

1 Tim 5:20

20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. KJV

2 Tim 4:2

2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. KJV

Titus 1:12-13

12 One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.

13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; KJV

Titus 2:11-15

11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

- 12 ***Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;***
 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.
 15 ***These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority.*** Let no man despise thee. KJV

And what is it that causes modern Christians to resent this part of Christianity? Vanity of mind, and darkened understanding, ignorance, alienation from the Life of God, and blindness of heart. There is often very little difference between the life of the average church-goer and the life of the unbeliever.

And, to that, Paul says:

- 20 But ye have not so learned Christ;**
21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:
22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;
23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

We hear so often in our day, “you can’t judge me.” Whether that is true or not, this is, no one has ever learned from Jesus Christ that it is OK to be ungodly. The only thing that He teaches and the thing that everyone hears who truly hears Him is that the old life from which we were “called” is to be totally and completely put away. That life was and is corrupt and completely incompatible with living in a godly fashion.

We have been born “from above” and with that new birth is a new life living in us, a life that God created “in righteousness and true holiness.”

What we learn from Jesus Christ is that our mind is to be “renewed” with a whole new and godly set of desires and goals and that we are to consciously and deliberately “put on” that New Life, that New Man, who, by the way, has no problem at all with what he must give up and no problem with the call of God to be holy.

I would dare to hazard a guess that, given a proper written test on the subject, very few believers in our day would be able to give a good answer as to the difference, in themselves, between the ‘new man’ and the ‘old man.’ And, I am convinced, even fewer would be able to describe in any kind of detail, just exactly *how* a believer is to put the one off and the other on.

Here is the thing though. If you have “heard” some other thing, some other format, some other expectation for the believer, you did not hear it from Jesus Christ. I will let you figure out for yourself where and from whom you did hear it.

This is not a thing that can be done once and finished. That ‘old man’ lives with us 24 hours a day and constantly struggles to have his own way. Thus, the ‘putting off’ and ‘putting on’ is a daily and sometimes minute by minute exercise and duty of the believer. The believer is, then, being called to a constant and continual battle against corruption in his own soul.

“Righteousness and true holiness” is the target for the believer’s victory. This is not some imaginary and theoretical holiness that we possess in eternity but a real and practical holiness that we live out in this present, day by day and hour by hour.

Having established the principle and set the goal, Paul then moved to a series of very blunt, very practical, instructions that cover, at least in a general way, the entire life of any child of God.

25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

We are to be honest with each other, not pretending, not hiding, and certainly not living a double life, representing ourselves to the group as a believer while living a wicked and hidden second life.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

Simply put, “do not get angry and sin: do not hold on to anger.” No rocket science here. Anger is not to control us and we are not to live as angry people.

There is a caveat here. There are things which cause people of conscience, dignity, compassion, and godliness to be angry. Taking God’s name in vain, open scorn of God’s Word and His Son, the oppression or abuse of the innocent, and the proclamation of a false gospel, among other things, ought to motivate the child of God to a righteous and holy anger, an anger that denounces the wickedness and moves to aid the weak and oppressed. This is not, however, an anger which acts out in violence, profanity, or any other kind of ungodly behavior, but which acts in the interests of the kingdom of God and the welfare of others.

Mark 3:1-5

- 1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.
- 2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.
- 3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.
- 4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

- 5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. KJV

Jesus' anger moved Him to do righteously, and so should ours.

27 Neither give place to the devil.

Every sin, every sinful attitude or disposition, every refusal to obey God and be holy, every act, emotion, decision, or commitment that is contrary to the general principle "walk worthy of the calling of God" is a decision to give the devil a room in your life. And he willingly occupies all territory not consciously committed and given to God in obedience.

But the devil is not content ever with the 'place' that he is given. If he so much as gets his foot through the door, he will mercilessly pursue a course of occupying and destroying the entire life. **Listen to me.** If the devil has so much as a 'toe-hold' in your life and you are not actively fighting him to take it back, you are on your way to destruction. Your enemy has no compassion for you. In fact, he has active hatred for your soul and will not rest until he has destroyed your life.

Peter gave us good counsel concerning him.

1 Peter 5:8-9

- 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. KJV

Any commitment to holiness, if it is sincere and made with integrity, will begin to expose areas where change is needed. The purpose and decision to change is an act of war and it is taken as such by the kingdom of darkness. Rarely will advancement be made without a battle. You can rest assured of that.

- 29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.**
- 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:**

This principle was so important in the mind of Paul that he repeated himself in this same lesson.

5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

Rules for conversation for the believer:

absolutely nothing corrupt, filthy, coarse, or moronic
everything said with a purpose to do good to the one hearing it
or, to give God thanks for His blessings.

Limits the scope of conversation, does it not?

But understand, this does not mean that we are quoting the Bible 24/7 or only willing to talk about spiritual matters. There is conversation that is not corrupt which is designed to encourage, instruct, build relationships, convey important information relative to our jobs and a thousand other things. The point is that our conversation, both in style and content, should be always designed to be helpful to others and glorifying on some level to God. There might even be a light-hearted joke or two in there.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Right between verses 29 and 31 we have this. It causes me to think that in particular the arena of conversation is an area to which the Spirit of God is particularly sensitive and can be easily grieved.

More on this next week.

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