

Living In Resurrection Power
(Week 7)
Ephesians 4:17-32
“New Life”

Introduction

“Therefore, I say this and testify in The LORD: You should no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their thoughts. They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more. But this is not how you came to know Christ...”

Ephesians 4:17-20a

Paul wanted the church of Ephesus to fully comprehend that although they were once pagan Gentiles, they had been brought from death unto life, from darkness into the light. Although by typical Jewish standards, they would have still been considered to be Gentiles, by the grace of God, they were Gentiles no longer. They had been reborn, and as such, the old ways by which they had been accustomed to living were no longer possible for them. The child of God does sin, but the child of God cannot “live in sin”. There is a vast difference. The lost and unregenerate soul knows no other existence but a sinful one, for there is no enlightenment from The Spirit to provide spiritual truth. There is but one hope for the depravity of mankind. He has not the power to “improve himself”. He must be reborn in order to become what God had in mind for him to become.

Paul, under the direction of The Spirit of God, describes for us perfectly the total depravity of mankind. They live in the **“futility of their thoughts”** and are **“darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God”**. And as such, they only live for what worldly and sensual pleasures they can find for themselves in the darkness. The church at Ephesus would understand this description of debauchery completely, for they had witnessed it firsthand. Ephesus was arguably the most vile city in the world at the time. It was a center of worship for the pagan goddess Artemis (or Diana). The temple that was dedicated to the goddess Artemis was a place where every form of sexual immorality one could possibly think of was standard practice. In fact, sexual perversion was considered as “worshipful”. So, of course, thousands would flock to the temple to engage in this unbridled lewdness as often as possible. This was exactly the kind of filth that surrounded the small community of believers at Ephesus, and the pressure that surely had been brought to bear upon them to conform was no doubt tremendous. Paul reminds them that they were no longer part of that world. They had been forever changed.

In the first chapter of *Romans*, Paul explains just how ordinary people could become so consumed by sin. The evidence of God is all around them, but they purposefully choose to ignore it. They begin by denying God, and then, turn to idolatry. Now remember, idolatry is not limited to the worship of a carved image. It goes much deeper than that. Idolatry is the desire to have anything over the desire to have God. The progression that Paul lays out in *Romans* is a perfect description of what is happening in our own country today. People deny the existence of God, so they are free to pursue their own selfish desires. This leads them to the place where their conscience has been seared or completely destroyed. They then become so darkened in their thinking, that God gives them over to their own lusts, and they actually celebrate and embrace evil, rather than be repulsed by it.

“Although they know God’s just sentence — that those who practice such things deserve to die —they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them.”

Romans 1:32

Did you catch that? They actually **celebrate** wickedness and perversion! Sound familiar? The things that people used to be ashamed to even speak about in public are now being honored with special holidays and parades! Welcome to The United States of America, my friends. We are truly living in the last days. We, the Church of Christ, however, have been called out from among those who practice

wickedness and debauchery. We have been set apart for the glory of God. We have not been improved upon, but rather reborn, recreated by The Spirit with a Transformed Mind, Method, and Motivation.

A Transformed Mind

“But this is not how you came to know Christ, assuming you heard about Him and were taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus, to take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires, to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and to put on the new self, the one created according to God’s likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.” Ephesians 4:20-24

I absolutely LOVE what Paul says here about turning away from sinfulness. Too many preachers today preach “cheap grace”. “Just ask Jesus to come into your heart, and you can go one living like you always have”. This is NOT the true message of the gospel my friends. Those who are truly saved, who have been regenerated by God’s Spirit, have been given the grace to overcome sin! This is what Paul means when he says, **“Assuming you heard about him and were taught BY Him”**. You cannot stay where you are and go with God! Turning away from sin is a requirement of salvation. Anyone who has truly been taught **by** Christ will despise their sin and change their direction in order to follow Christ.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

When The Spirit of God enters into us at salvation, He transforms our mind. He changes us from the inside out. We are not only enlightened in God’s truth and awakened to spiritual life, but our desires are also changed. We begin to despise the very things that we thought we could not do without. Christianity is not a “self help” program to improve upon our old nature. It is the very death of our old nature, as we put on new life in Christ. The verse in Corinthians doesn’t read “old things are improved upon”, it says **“old things are passed away”**. When God lives in you, the old person that you were is put to death.

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

So the questions remains, “Why do Christians still sometimes sin?” Because we live in a body of flesh, that’s why. Our old self has been crucified, and we are set free from sin, but our old nature still rears its head in order to tempt us. We still live in a fallen world. Although it cannot control us, we still can hear it calling out for us to sin. The main difference? While a lost person can enjoy the pleasure of sin, the saved person will be convicted and sickened by it. Sin is no longer pleasurable to the regenerated child of God. We are repulsed by it, and when we are tempted and deceived by it, we immediately long to run to God for forgiveness. I heard a minister just this week telling a group of children, we do not need to be afraid to run to God and ask for His forgiveness, for God loves to forgive us! What a great message for us all. Our God LOVES to forgive!

“If we say, ‘we have no sin,’ we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” John 1:8-9

In short... God loves to forgive! But, if we have been truly taught by Jesus, then we know that we must turn away from sin in order to be saved from it. Otherwise, the cross is really pointless. After all, why be saved from sin in order to continue sinning?! But thankfully, by God’s grace, we have been given a transformed mind, to enable us to rid ourselves of sin. Sin is no longer attractive to us. Holiness is. We do not enjoy doing the things that we used to do, because we simply do not think like we used to

think. Our minds just do not work that way anymore. They have been “rewired”. We have been given the mind of Christ (**1 Corinthians 2:16**).

A Transformed Method

“Therefore, putting away lying, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another. Be angry and do not sin. Don’t let the sun go down on your anger, and don’t give the devil an opportunity. Let the thief no longer steal.”
Ephesians 4:25-28a

According to the book of James, **“faith without works is dead”** (**James 2:17**). Those who have been regenerated by The Spirit will also be transformed in their way of living, in their “method” if you will. We don’t just stop sinning. We go **from** something **TO** something. We stop lying and start speaking the truth. We stop stealing and get a job. We go from tantrums to the proper control of our temper, for it is much easier to forgive, knowing that we ourselves have been forgiven of many sins. It is a simple and obvious reality that someone who has been changed from within will also change the way they conduct themselves outwardly.

Paul makes it abundantly clear that people should be able to actually see the change that has taken place in us. So many people claim to be believers, but conduct themselves like the rest of the world. This is absolutely not how someone who has truly been “taught by Jesus” will behave. A transformed mind will manifest itself by a transformed method of living. The world has enough hypocrites. What it really needs are some examples.

I heard a song once about a little boy who got baptized in the river and was given a new suit of clothes to wear by his father. He quickly dried off and put on his new clothes, but refused to put his old shoes back on, opting instead to walk home barefoot. The chorus of the song says:

*“I’ve been through the water, and I come out clean
And I got new clothes to cover me.
And you don’t wear your old shoes on your brand new feet
When you’ve ...been through the water.”*

What a true statement that is! When our minds have been changed by The Spirit, we don’t “walk” the way that we used to walk, but rather we strive to;

“Live worthy of the calling you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to keep the unity of The Spirit through the bond of peace.”
Ephesians 4:1b-2

Or, as I heard an old preacher once say, “If your religion hasn’t changed you, then you need to change your religion.” Knowing Christ is to be different, not only in the way that you think, but in the way that you conduct yourself. You have a transformed mind, which in turn leads to a transformed method. We go from something... to something completely different. You see, being a Christian is not just about the things that you **stop** doing, it is also about the things that you **start** doing. We walk as Christ walked. We go from stealing to working, from lying to truth, from promiscuity to holiness, from being faithless to being faithful. For it is no longer us who lives, but Christ living **in us**.

A Transformed Motive

“Instead, he is to do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need. No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear. And don’t grieve God’s Holy Spirit. You were sealed by Him for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be

removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.” Ephesians 4:28b-32

Not only do we have a different way of living, but a different motivation for living. We now live to serve others as Christ did. Notice that Paul says that the thief should stop stealing and get a job, but why? So that he can not only provide for his own living, but so that he can help out the less fortunate! You see, when The Holy Spirit changes our mind and our methods, He also changes our motivation. We no longer live for ourselves. We live for the uplifting of others! If you remember from last week's lesson, this is the reason that we are given our spiritual gifts, for the edification of the body. To be changed by Christ is to be changed in our motivation. We have been empowered for the building up of those around us.

I love what Paul says here about foul language. Have you ever been around someone who talks like a sailor? Does such crude behavior encourage or discourage you? Have you ever noticed that people who curse profusely are also the most negative people on earth? I mean, when everything is going great, there's no need for cursing is there? Foul mouthed people are basically unhappy people, always cursing and complaining about something or someone. Their own lives are miserable and, therefore, they want everyone else to be miserable too. As the old saying goes, "misery loves company".

The child of God has absolutely nothing to be negative about. God expects His kids to act as though they have been blessed, because quite frankly... we have been. Do you remember what happened to all the children of Israel, who had been rescued from Egyptian bondage, and yet complained about the conditions of the wilderness every step of the way? They all died in the wilderness, that's what. God is not pleased with "whiners", my friends. And that is exactly what a "foul mouthed" person is. Negative. The older I get, the less I want to surround myself with people who seem to find the bad in everything. Can I get a witness? I mean, I can get down and depressed easily enough by my lonesome. I don't really need anyone else to bring me down! What I really need is encouragement. Now listen closely to the words of Paul:

“No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear.”

You see, you don't have to "cuss" to be foul. The word that Paul uses here for "foul" actually means rotten and was a word used to describe fruits or vegetables that had gone bad. Being negative and discouraging is foul enough in and of itself. You may very well pride yourself on the swear words that you never say, but does what comes out of your mouth encourage, or discourage? Do you build up the faith of others, or tear it down? If your heart has been changed, then so will your speech.

“But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a person.”
Matthew 15:18

Paul reminds his readers that when we claim to be a new creation, but act according to our old nature, we grieve the Spirit of God (**vs. 30**). Everything that we say and do, should be weighed by the affect it will have on those around us as we are putting their needs ahead of our own. We are to live worthy of our calling, setting aside the old nature that lives for the sole preservation of self. The Ephesians needed only to look around to see the bitterness, anger, and wrath of the Gentiles that lived around them. But they, as children of light, had been set apart to show a lost world the hope and new life found in Christ Jesus. We are called to do likewise. We have been empowered for a new way of living; A Transformed Mind, Method, and Motivation. We live to please Christ and to encourage others. The way we used to think and act, has been crucified... with Christ, and we long for it no more! Or as the old hymn says:

*“I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus,
I have decided to follow Jesus, No turning back, no turning back.”*

And let all of God's people say... TRUTH!!!