

Grow Up! (II)

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Ephesians 4:17-24

Last two weeks I left you with this question:

-How can I not walk in a manner worthy of my calling if I have experienced God's GRACE in my life?

We stressed these points:

1. Character is the first concern of a worthy walk.
2. A worthy walk also demands healthy relationships in the church family. A worthy walk is a call to unity; unity of the body, in humility and meekness, in bearing each other with love. All those virtues point to having healthy relationships in the church family. Let me warn you that some of those relationships are difficult. Let us not avoid them. They are part of the body of the Christ.

Thus, **I need His GRACE; we need GRACE.**

John Stott says:

“Paul opens this section on the church's **purity**, just as he opened the former section on the church's **unity**, with an assertion of his authority as an apostle of Christ:¹

Verse 1: **“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling...”**

Verse 17: **“Now this I say and testify in the Lord (and insist on it in the Lord), that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.”**

Let us read the passage:

⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. (Ephesians 4:17-19 ESV)

-Walk of Vanity, Futility

You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do...

- Who are these, I mean the Gentiles? Non-believing Gentiles, who don't believe in Christ. Their lifestyle was meaningless, empty; they lived shallow lives.

- Paul specifically stresses **the mind: that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.**

The mind is the place our character is shaped.

No wonder Paul talks often about **renewing our mind, transforming our mind...**

- **Last week my sermon title was: Grow Up!**

Paul continues to explain how the church can grow up! **Give up your old lifestyle,** your old habits, your old way of thinking, your old behavior.

- When we accept Christ, God gives us **a new name, a new identity, a new beginning,** freedom from the bondage of sin.

It is a NEW CREATION.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." (2 Cor 5:17 ESV)

Let me remind you how Paul told the Ephesian church about this past life:

remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated ...having no hope and without God in the world. (Eph 2:11)

But God... But now with Christ Jesus:

We are adopted, not alienated, saved, new identity, new creation. The old is gone. Don't live in darkness.

¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous... (18,19a)

When we live in darkness, when we refuse to be enlightened, and over and over we ignore the voice of God, ignore to see His light, our hearts will be hardened. Our ears will become callous. We see but don't see; we hear but don't hear. How sad is that **God's truth** will not be understood, or God's truth will be ignored.

Jesus faced a group of pharisees who refused him. He, too, faced **hardened hearts.**

(Jesus) grieved at their hardness of heart. (Mark 3:5 ESV)

Coming back to our passage,

The result?

They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. (19)

They will be walking in their sexual desires and all kinds of impurity. Their sinful appetite will drive them to make decisions. They are **greedy** to practice every kind of impurity.

“This darkness, distorted reasoning leading to alienation from God, and resulting passions and desires that lead to uncleanness and sins.... the problem lies in the mind and in choices made against God.”²

Paul is saying no more walk in that old life. **I therefore... urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling you have received... (4:1)**

In the letter to the church in Colossi Paul says: **“walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;”** (Col 1:10 ESV)

We are not same person anymore. We have a new name, a new identity, a new DNA, a new character.

It is not easy.

Even Paul says, he struggled to walk in the new way: **“For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”** (Romans 7:15 ESV)

We are battling against sin. Learning to have new life, new character in JESUS. Some days we win, some days we are defeated. But overall, we continue to strive and live a Christ-centered life.

- I wish God made things easier. He did not. He wanted us to live in this imperfect world, where we learn to battle against sin, and against the master of sin, the devil himself. The Word of God is full of these stories.

Here is the turning point. **We learn to trust God.** over and over again.

-Illustration: I get discouraged from the empty church. Discouragement takes me to the sin of hopelessness or anger. On Monday, I was listening to a sermon by RC Sproul about worship. He quoted from Hebrews 12, where it says when we worship, we are not alone. “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering...” Heb 12:22 ESV). We are not alone, my dear sisters and brothers. When we worship, the angels are with us. We are surrounded by the presence of God.

The same day, someone else came to my office and shared with me her personal devotions. There was this pastor working heard on his sermon for a small congregation. His wife said to him, “Why are you spending too much time on this sermon?” He replied, “You forget my dear, how large my audience will be!” “Nothing is trivial here if heaven looks on. We shall play a better game if, ‘seeing we are encompassed,’ we remember who is in the grandstand.” (Hope Each day July 6, 2023)

The old person does not trust God. The old person does not see hope, does not know about the hope of Jesus. The old person tries to fix things.

Paul continues telling us about new person.

-Walk like Christ

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, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (4:17-24 ESV)

This is not the way we learned from Christ. Right?

Christ wants us to **walk worthy of our calling**.

-Paul says that Ephesian church **learned Christ**. Բայց դուք այսպէս չսորվեցաք Քրիստոսը

They learned Christ, and not about Christ. Question, is there a difference?

We learned **the new way** from **Christ**— to **be IN CHRISIT**.

We are not taught about him, we are taught to LIVE In HIM. The new way is not a theory; it is a life, it is to be in Christ.

-The verb “learned” in Greek has different explanations: “to learn by use and practice...”³

-The disciple of Jesus is the one who is continually and consistently learning.

We walk a new way, as we learn who Christ is, when we live in Jesus.

-That does not happen automatically; if we don’t spend time with Him, how do we learn Christ? The further you spend time with someone, the further you become like that person.

So there is tension between the old and the new person. Transformation never ends on this earth.

-Paul continues explaining the subject of this study, what are we learning?
assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus...

The standard is the truth in Jesus. This is not situational ethics. This is not we switch the truth as we want. The truth is based IN JESUS. Because he is the truth and life. And since **He is the truth**, he can give us freedom. The truth sets us free.

-Paul continues explaining what will happen if we don't put off the old self, how we are captive to sin; he brings again the essential part **of the mind:**
²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Paul explains the same truth in the letter to the Colossians:

“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.”
(Col 3:9b,10 ESV)

I stress attending Bible studies, or spending time in going deeper in the Bible, or giving time for your spiritual maturity in prayer and service, because our mind needs focus and training. Our mind needs a correct understanding the truth, essential conducts of Christianity. If we expect to live a Christ-centered life, we must learn to THINK differently. We cannot just change our behavior automatically.

I love what Isaiah said:

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isa 61:10 ESV)

Application:

1. It is not easy to put off the old self. The old self can resurface, especially in times of crisis.

I remind myself who I am. We took time reading Eph. 1-3. It is all about what God is doing our lives. I AM is my God. All I learn in this world is about me and me and me. I, and I and I. The new self is no longer says "I" but now the "I" is under construction of "I AM". Life is not all about me centered. It how we can be God's workmanship.

Illustration: I have been a California resident for 18 years now. I am no longer in Aleppo, or Beirut. I have a new residency. I should drive my car in this land with new rules. I should park the car with the regulations of this land. Let me be honest, I fail many times.

California is not heaven; we have a new identity from heaven. Let us act like that. Worthy of our calling.

2. How about people who don't have the same faith and beliefs like yours?

We tend to have an attitude towards unbelievers. We should be careful not to fall in the trap of self-righteousness. We are called to have a different lifestyle. Don't brag, or don't gossip about them, don't look down on them. Pray that God will give you a loving heart to reach out to them with love, not with a judgmental attitude. We are in the world not of the world. But we are in the world to be salt and light. Make sure Christ's love is shining from you.

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen. (Eph 3:16-21 NLT)

1. John R.W. Stott, *The Bible Speaks Today, The Message of Ephesians*, P 133

2. Klyne Snodgrass, *NIV Study Bible Commentary Ephesians*, P 231

3. Blue Letter Lexicon <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3129/kjv/tr/0-1/>

Ken Boa

I ask that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe. (Ephesians 1:17-19)

May the Father grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:16-19)