

Session 4

August 16, 2020

WE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

Ephesians 4:17-32

Christ-followers are more than just *saved*; they are *different*. Jesus called us to be “salt” in a bland world and “light” in a dark one (Matt. 5:13-14). In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul called those in Christ “new creations.” That principle—newness—must be displayed by those who have been born anew (see John 3:3) in legitimate, tangible, and noticeable ways. A changed life provides ample *assurance* of salvation to those who are in Christ (John 15:4-5), and a powerful *witness* of salvation to those without Him (Matt. 5:15-16).

In this week’s text, Paul reviews three areas where Christ’s teaching can be summed up, “out with the old...and in with the new!”

A new walk (vv. 17-21). The contrast that Paul offers in verse 17 was introduced in verse 1. To “walk worthy of the calling you have received” demonstrates a change from the previous walk of the world (see also 2:1-2). Ironically, the ungodly walk of the world begins in the mind. Notice the progression: apart from the transformation that God’s Spirit brings (see Rom. 12:2), the *mind* is empty of meaningful, eternal thoughts (v. 17); *understanding* is darkened; devoid of the any spiritual light (v. 18), leading to an *ignorance* of the things of God, and a *hardness* to the inclinations of God (v. 18). The hardness of the lost heart leads then to a *callousness* toward anything related to God, and an openness to every type of immorality (*promiscuity*), impurity, and reckless abandon (v. 19). Hence, an unregenerate mind will always lead to ungodly behavior. The “but” of verse 20 reminds the church that things are different for followers of Christ. Believers learn a new way...a true way...because Christ embodies the truth (v. 21).

A new worldview (vv. 22-24). Not only do Christ-followers adopt a new walk, but their entire *worldview* changes. In class at BCF, I define *worldview* as “the lens through which we see, interpret, and respond to our reality.” Whereas the *old self*—that *former way of life*—is corrupted by entertaining desires that never truly fulfill (v. 22), God’s children have put on a *new self* (v. 24). Our corrupt desires have been cleaned up by a renewing of our minds. The word *renewed* here literally means “a return to youthfulness,” and the verb tense is continual, pointing to both the need for continual renewal as well as to the reality of continual renewal. What does this *new self* look like? A lot like Jesus! How does this *new self* understand the the world? A lot like Jesus does! Believers have a new worldview that sees, interprets, and responds to reality like Jesus does. Why? Because we have been re-made in His likeness, one of righteousness and true holiness (v. 24).

A new word (vv. 25-32). In these verses, the particulars of this new self are clearly (if not harshly) laid out. While actions may indeed speak louder than words, words speak plenty loud! That Paul needs to mention these examples in the form of commands indicates just how *harmful* vicious speech in particular can be for the body of Christ. As well, it indicates just how *prevalent* destructive speech was (and still is!) in the church (see also James 3:1-12). Because “we are members of one another” (v. 25) we need to encourage one another. Hence, lying, anger, unwholesome (or *foul*) language, shouting, and slander are all specifically targeted as part of the old self, and associated with that which grieves the Holy Spirit; whereas truth, edification,

kindness, compassion, and forgiveness are commands aimed at modeling the new self, the one forgiven by God through Christ's redemptive work.