

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

"Christ Learned"

Ephesians 4:21-24

Introduction

1. The life of a believer is expected to correspond in some measure to God's work of grace in one's life. This is a sharp departure from the former life (vv. 17 – 19).

2. The verb "learn" (ἐμάθετε emathete) is aorist. It points to conversion and the ensuing life. Succinctly, a knowledge of Christ does not lead one to live as a heathen.

3. "Learn" is associated with "Christ," His person and not necessarily a set of doctrines. Hence to learn our Lord as the Son of God, God in our very being, the Holy One of God, the Saviour from sin, is to have holiness in life. One cannot live in darkness and sin who has the knowledge of Christ.

4. Two additional verbs accent the reality of the Ephesian's salvation. They had "heard." The "if" (εἴγε eige) does not express doubt, but does verify a fact. It is a Greek first class condition, therefore, assumed to be true. They heard "Him," a pronoun found in the emphatic position. He was the μεσσαιε the Ephesians heard. They were also taught "in Him," that is in communion with Him. Moreover to have heard and been taught in this way is "the truth" as it is "in Jesus." Since "truth" (ἀλήθεια aletheia) is anarthrous, whatever is truth or spiritual reality is embodied in Christ.

5. Now, the specific line which this all took (the hearing and teaching in Christ) is outlined in three specifics.

1. PUTTING OFF v. 22

a. The Action

The verb is aorist, hence a definite, decisive, and permanent act is indicated. It should be translated "did put away" (ἀποθέσθαι). This can only refer to the work of our Substitute on Calvary (Ro. 6:6). Here is a work done and to be considered done (Ro. 6:11).

b. The Consideration

"Old man" speaks of the old sin nature. It is not eradicated in a believer, but because of Calvary a judgment has been gained against it (Ro. 8:4). It is possible to enjoy freedom from its claims. It is associated with the former manner of life as a Gentile.

c. The Corruption

The "old man" grows more and more corrupt (manifestly) by virtue of deceitful lusts. The present tense (φθειρόμενον ftheiromenon) shows it is a progressive thing. The desires of the old man's deceits leads inevitably to destruction. Thank God, Christ dealt with this for us.

Note: Paul's appeal here is to live in the light of a finished work. Hallelujah.

2. BEING RENEWED v. 23

a. The Action

Here is a present tense verb (ἀνανεοῦσθαι ananeousthai). It is an experience which is the antithesis of the growing corruptness of the old man. Here is a holy process in new development. Being passive voice, it concerns God's work in the life.

b. The Consideration

The renewal urged here concerns the spiritual life and faculty coming out in mental action. This should be contrasted with the "vanity of the mind" (v. 17). What needs to be renewed is not outward habits or modes of life, but the interior principle of life which lies back of all that is outward and transient (Ro. 12:2).

3. PUTTING ON v. 24

a. The Action

Here is the counterpart of the negative (v. 22). The two acts are totally inseparable. The aorist should be rendered "did put on" (ἐνδύσασθαι endusasthai). It is a completed historical event.

b. The Consideration

"New" is in sense of fresh, bright, unused (cf. Mt. 9:17 (καίνον kainon)). This is new nature in Christ. It is "after God" (κατὰ kata) or answers to His ideal (cf. Col. 3:10). The parallel words "righteousness" and "holiness" describe the pattern "after God." The former relates to man and the latter to God. The words also suggest what the original creation after God's image was – moral and not physical.

Conclusion There is no way to disassociate righteous holy living from salvation. To confess the latter is to espouse the former. God help us to be honest about our confession.