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# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XCVII : LIVING OUT OUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST IN OUR CHURCHES (4:17-5:2)

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## *Ephesians 4:20 ~ 24* —

*But ye have not so learned Christ, if so be ye have hearde of him and are taught in him even as the trueth is in Iesu. So then as concernynge the coversacion in tyme past laye from you that olde man which is corrupte thorow the deceivable lustes and be ye renewed in the sprete of youre myndes and put on that newe man which after the ymage of God is shapen in ryghtewesnes and true holynes.* (Tyndale's New Testament, 1524)

*But yee haue not so learned Christ, If so be yee haue heard him, and haue bene taught by him, as the trueth is in Iesus, That is, that yee cast off, concerning the conuersation in time past, that olde man, which is corrupt through the deceiueable lustes, And be renewed in the spirit of your minde, And put on ye new man, which after God is created vnto righteousnes, and true holines.* (Geneva Bible, 1599)

*But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* (King James Version, 1769)

*and ye did not so learn the Christ, if so be ye did hear him, and in him were taught, as truth is in Jesus; ye are to put off concerning the former behaviour the old man, that is corrupt according to the desires of the deceit, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new man, which, according to God, was created in righteousness and kindness of the truth.* (Young's Literal Translation, 1898)

*But ye did not so learn Christ; if so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus: that ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.* (Revised Version, 1885)

*But ye did not so learn Christ; if so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus: that ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.* (American Standard Version, 1901)

*You did not so learn Christ! – assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.* (Revised Standard Version, 1952)

*But as for you, not in this manner did you learn the Christ, since, indeed, as is the case, you heard and in Him were taught just as truth is in Jesus, that you have put off once for all with reference to your former manner of life the old self who is being corrupted according to the passionate desires of deceit; moreover, that you are being constantly renewed with reference to the spirit of your mind; and that you have put on once for all the new self who after God was created in righteousness and holiness of truth.* (Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation, 1961)

*But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.* (New King James Version, 1982)

*But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.* (New American Standard Version, 1995)

*That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.* (New International Version, 2011)

*But that is not the way you learned Christ! – assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be*

renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (English Standard Version, 2011)

ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐχ οὕτως ἐμάθετε τὸν Χριστὸν εἶγε αὐτὸν ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδιδάχθητε καθὼς ἐστὶν ἀλήθεια ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ ἀποθέσθαι ὑμᾶς κατὰ τὴν προτέραν ἀναστροφὴν τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν φθειρόμενον κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ἀπάτης ἀνανεοῦσθαι δὲ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας (Stephanus Greek NT, 1550)

Ἐμεῖς δὲ οὐχ οὕτως ἐμάθετε τὸν Χριστὸν, εἶ γε αὐτὸν ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδιδάχθητε, καθὼς ἐστὶν ἀλήθεια ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἀποθέσθαι ὑμᾶς κατὰ τὴν προτέραν ἀναστροφὴν τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν φθειρόμενον κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ἀπάτης, ἀνανεοῦσθαι δὲ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας. (NA28 Greek New Testament)

## **Exhortation to Live According to the New Humanity Rather Than the Old (4:17-24)**

**this pericope contains two major exhortations — the first is a negative: do not live like the Gentiles (vv 17-19; first sentence)**

<sup>17</sup> 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.

**negative depiction of Gentile living, organized around three perfect participles (a verbal adjective):**

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> They have become **callous** and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

**the second exhortation is a positive: but live according to Christ's commands (vv 20-24; second sentence)**

<sup>20</sup> But that is not the way you learned Christ! — <sup>21</sup> assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,

**three phrases describing the ethical conduct of Christian living, organized around three infinitives ('to' + verb, allowing the verb to be used as a noun, adjective or adverb):**

<sup>22</sup> **to put off** your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is being corrupted through lusts that come from deceit,

<sup>23</sup> and **to be renewed** in the spirit of your minds,

<sup>24</sup> and **to put on** the new self, created after the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness that comes from the truth.

## **Practical Injunctions About the Old and New Life (4:25 – 5:2)**

**negatively ...**

**positively ...**

**motivational clause**

**lying** <sup>25</sup> Therefore, having put away falsehood, ...  
... let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, ...  
... for we are members one of another.

**anger** <sup>26</sup> Be angry and do not sin; ...  
... do not let the sun go down on your anger, ...  
<sup>27</sup> ... and give no opportunity to the devil.

**stealing** <sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, ...  
... but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, ...  
... so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

**evil talk** <sup>29</sup> Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, ...  
... but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, ...  
... that it may give grace to those who hear.

**[possibly major motivation for all the preceding injunctions]**

<sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

**negative features associated with anger**

<sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice....

<sup>32</sup> ... Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, ...

... as God in Christ forgave you.

**[positive exhortation]**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

**[positive exhortation with motivational clause]**

<sup>2</sup> And walk in love, ...

... as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

***“In a sharp contrast to the prevailing way of non-Christian thinking and living, Paul reminds his readers that they have learned a different way. Through their personal relationship with Jesus Christ, they have a new identity and an entirely new way to live that is shaped by Christ and his teaching.”*** [Arnold, 284]

**FITTING vv. 20-24 INTO THE CONTEXT** — This passage, as a piece of direct exhortation about both what is inappropriate and what is appropriate to the believer’s calling, continues the address to the readers begun in 4:1-3.... The positive side of [Paul’s] exhortation to appropriate conduct appeals to the tradition of teaching the readers have received, and particularly those aspects of the tradition that have ethical implications. ***This concern has been prepared for in the preceding passage, not only through the notion of living worthily of the calling but also through the importance attached to those ministers whose task is to pass on the apostolic tradition and thereby enable the Church to grow into maturity.***” [Lincoln, 289]

**GOOD OVERVIEW OF THE PASSAGE** — “So he begins in vv 17-19 with the strong insistence that his readers are not to fall back into the patterns of thinking and resultant behavior which characterize the surrounding Gentile world. In line with traditional Jewish apologetic, he draws a drastic contrast between such thinking and living and that which God intended. What Gentile Christians should have left behind is an existence in which intellectual perception is totally distorted and, having lost its grip on reality, has become permeated by folly and futility. In such a state, in which the addressees’ surrounding society still finds itself, people’s thinking has become darkened so that they are blind to the true purpose of life and incapable of apprehending truth. Their relationship to the source of life, God himself, has become broken. This is on account of their culpable ignorance, their hardening of themselves to the sense of God available to them. Accompanying this lack of basic insight is a moral bankruptcy, since dullness of ethical sensitivity has in turn led to general debauchery and unrestrained sexual behaviour, to the active pursuit of all kinds of immorality, and to an insatiable greed which disregards the welfare of others.

“The transition from this general denunciation of Gentile conduct to what is expected of Christian believers comes in vv 20,21, as the readers are told in a striking turn of phrase that all this type of behavior certainly has nothing to do with how they ‘learned Christ.’ Between them and their former Gentile lifestyle stands the teaching which can be summed up in Christ, the instruction in the tradition through which the risen Christ shapes the character and lives of believers. [Paul] is assured that they have not been instructed falsely in such a way as would reproduce the Gentile pattern of life but according to the truth in Jesus, the norm which should call forth the desired quality of life. Three fundamental aspects of that life are set out in vv 22-24.

“First, it involves stripping off the rotting garment of the old humanity. The old person is in a process of decay which will lead to final ruin, a process brought about through the evil desires generated by deceit, by an ultimately illusory view of life. Believers must live out the significance of what has already taken place ... and abandon the old person that they no longer are.

“Second, since they are not yet completely new, they must allow themselves to be continually renewed in the inner person, particularly in the mind.

“Third, this restoration to right thinking will result in right conduct, because the readers are to put on the fresh clean clothing of the new humanity with its just and holy living. The new identity, already achieved for believers, has to be appropriated so that its distinctive ethical qualities will become evident.

“The new person is created to be like God, and this likeness is exhibited in the righteousness and holiness that epitomize a life in a right relationship to God and humanity and also recall characteristics of this God himself. The existence of the new person is ultimately related to the truth of the gospel and of the apostolic tradition, a moral truth able to give rise to the virtues of righteousness and holiness in those who receive it.

“Naturally, because of both the form and content of the passage as an ethical exhortation, believers and their lives are the focus of [Paul’s] attention. ***In both their previous and their present state it is their relationship to God that is emphasized — separated from the life of God in the former case and created in God’s likeness in the latter. In [Paul’s] discussion of the existence of the new person, divine initiative and human responsibility go hand in hand. The decisive transference from the old humanity to the new has already been accomplished by God’s action, but believers must appropriate this for themselves by abandoning the old person, taking on the new and its activities, and allowing themselves to be renewed.***” [Lincoln, 289f]

**STRUCTURE** — We might better understand Paul’s meaning here if we reverse the sentence. ***“The next sentence begins with a conditional statement in which the apodosis (the ‘then’ portion) is first and is then followed by the protasis (the ‘if’ portion): ‘If you heard and were taught ... then you did not learn.’*** This is followed by a series of three infinitives that fill out the content of what they were taught (and have consequently learned). The three infinitives thus have an exegetical (explanatory) function and, because of the context, carry an imperatival force.

*You were taught (and have thus learned) ...*

- 1. to take off the old self*
- 2. to be renewed*
- 3. to put on the new self”* [Arnold, 280]

***“The syntax of this sentence (vv. 20-24) is not easy to unravel, although the general sense is reasonably clear. Caird speaks of it as being ‘chaotic’ and any translation ‘is bound to be makeshift!’”*** [O’Brien, 324]

**v. 20 — But as for you, —** ὑμεῖς δὲ ... οὕτως [humeis de ... houtōs] — **EMPHATIC CONTRAST: ‘THE CHRISTIAN IS DIFFERENT THAN THE UNBELIEVER’** — Paul uses several grammatical means to place special emphasis upon the contrast between the believer and the unbeliever. *“The basis of the readers’ lives has been changed; [humeis, ‘you’] is emphatic; it is not the basis of everyone’s life that has been changed, only that of believers. They are then no longer to live as they once did as pagans. The abrupt beginning of v. 20 serves to stress the contrast between Christian and non-Christian existence. [Paul] does not detail now the new Christian way of living (this begins at v. 25) but supplies the reason for the change.”* [Best, 425; see also Lincoln, 279; O’Brien, 324; Hoehner, 593; Eadie, 334; Thielman, 300] “The conjunction (δὲ; de, ‘but’), the adverb (οὕτως; houtos, ‘in this way’) that refers to the preceding lines, and the personal pronoun (ὑμεῖς; humeis, ‘you’), which is unnecessary because the person and number are indicated by the verbal ending, all combine to provide a strong contrast with the manner of life Paul will now commend to the Ephesian believers. The worldviews and lifestyles of the unbelieving Gentiles are utterly opposed to the new life that these believers have in Christ.” [Arnold, 284] *“The behavior of Paul’s readers must bear no resemblance to the way of life he has just described. The (‘you’) is first in the sentence for emphasis, and the (‘but not so’) strikes a strong note of contrast difficult to reproduce in English. The translation, ‘but you — not so did you learn Christ!’ although hardly elegant, perhaps communicates the rhetorical emphasis.”* [Thielman, 300] “The pronoun is placed for emphasis before its verb. The point, therefore, is this — ‘if, as I take it to be the fact, it was He, the Christ, that was the subject and the sum of the preaching which you heard then.’” [Salmond, 341]

**not in this manner did you learn the Christ, —** οὐχ ... ἐμάθετε τὸν Χριστόν [ouch ... emathete ton Christon] — **UNUSUAL PHRASE: ‘WE ARE NOT TO LEARN A SUBJECT BUT WE ARE TO LEARN A PERSON’** — Paul makes a very unique and unusual statement to describe our salvation experience. Typically the things a person learns is content (e.g., laws, statutes, ordinances, rules, etc.) or a certain pattern of behavior (e.g., to obey God or to do good). Those things are true and part of the believers’ life (we are to learn what the Lord expects of us as His children and how to obey) but Paul is not speaking about that in this statement: *we are to learn a Person!* [Arnold, 284; see also Salmond, 340; Lincoln, 279f; Bruce, 356f]

*‘As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.’* (Col 2:6,7 NKJV)

*‘that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death’* (Phil 3:10 NKJV)

“The expression ‘learn Christ’ is unusual since the (‘learn’) does not typically have a person as its object.... Paul conceives of Christ as a living person, seated with God in the heavenly places (1:20), and so he thinks of those who believe in Christ as having a relationship with him: they are seated with him in the heavenly places (2:6), and Christ lives in their hearts (3:17). When they first believed the gospel (1:13) and then continued to mature in their faith (4:13), they certainly learned about Christ and his teachings, but they have also developed a relationship with him as a living person (cf. Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21; 3:8-10; 4:13; Col. 3:3).” [Thielman, 300]

**WE HAVE A LIVING SAVIOUR!** — *“In the NT the verb [manthano] is used to learn about things (Matt 9:13; Acts 23:27; 1 Cor 14:35; Phil 4:11; Rev 14:3), learn doctrine (Rom 16:17), learn a lesson (Matt 24:32 = Mark 13:28; 1 Tim 2:11; Heb 5:8), learn by example (1 Cor 4:6), and learn from persons such as Christ (Matt 11:29), God (John 6:45), and people (Gal 3:2; Phil 4:9; Col 1:7), but nothing about ‘learning a person’ (the same principle is also true in English). Yet in the present context it is stated that the believer is to learn Christ. The implication is that factual learning is insufficient, the goal is to know Christ personally.”* [Hoehner, 593f] *“The first formulation, ‘you did not learn Christ that way’, is without parallel. The phrase ‘to learn a person’ appears nowhere else in the Greek Bible, and to date it has not been traced in any prebiblical Greek document.... Learning Christ means welcoming him as a living person and being shaped by his teaching. This involves submitting to his rule of righteousness and responding to his summons standards and values completely different from what they have known.”* [O’Brien, 324; see also Hodge, 185] *“Successful preaching brings its hearers into a relation with the living Christ; to respond to it is to learn Christ.... It is this Christ into whom the readers have already been said to be growing (4.15). The aorist tense of the verb probably indicates the moment or period when they became Christians.... [T]o learn Christ is a good summary of what it means to be a Christian.”* [Best, 426f] *“Literally, verse 20 reads: ‘You did not learn the Christ this way.’ No parallel exists for learning a person. More is intended than mere learning facts about Christ. That is, the readers have been schooled in the Messiah. They know him, have firsthand knowledge of him, and know how radically different his life is from that of the Gentiles.”* [Snodgrass, 232] *“You did not learn Christ is a direct reference to salvation. To learn Christ is to be saved.... The aorist is also used in John 6:45, where Jesus spoke to those who had ‘learned from the Father’ — indicating a reference to the saving act of faith under the Old Covenant which would lead them now to Him. In Matthew 11:29, Jesus offered one of the loveliest of all salvation invitations: ‘Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me’ (KJV). This use of manthano is also in the aorist tense, indicating a single unrepeatable act. Both the context and the use of the aorist tense of the verb ‘to learn’ in these passages lead to the conclusion that this learning refers to the moment of saving faith.”* [MacArthur, 173; see also Salmond, 341] *“He did not say ‘learned about Christ,’ because it is possible to learn about Christ and never be saved. To ‘learn Christ’ means to have a personal relationship to Christ so that you get to know Him better each day. I can learn about Sir Winston Churchill because I own many of his books and can secure books about his life. But I can never ‘learn him’ because he is dead. Jesus Christ is alive! Therefore, I can ‘learn Christ’ through a personal fellowship with Him.”* [Wiersbe, 39] *“The expression ‘to learn Christ’ has become familiar to our ears, and we do not at once realise how*



*strangely it must have sounded when it was used for the first time.*” [Robinson, 147] **“This unique expression most likely heightens the element of personal relationship with Christ that is central to the Christian faith and emphasized in Ephesians. Jesus has risen from the dead and has been exalted to the right hand of the Father.”** [Arnold, 284] “Usually we learn subjects, not persons; but the Christian’s choicest lesson–book is his lovable Lord. Instruction about Him falls short of the mark; personal intimacy is requisite to rivet the bond of union with the Saviour.” [Simpson, 104] **“[Christos] is not simply the doctrine or religion of Christ ... but Christ Himself. Col. ii. 6. See also Phil. iii. 10.... Once dark, dead, dissolute, and apathetic, they had learned Christ as the light and the life — as the purifier and perfecter of His pupils.”** [Eadie, 334] **“The expression ‘implies full acceptance of Christ and His work, even in respect of the direction of life.’”** [Bruce, 356] **“Just as a Jew learned Torah, so now a Christian can be said to learn Christ.”** [Lincoln, 280]

**v. 21 — assuming that you have heard about Him — εἰγε αὐτὸν ἠκούσατε [eige auton ekousate] — THIS DOES NOT IMPLY DOUBT BUT RATHER CONFIDENT ASSUMPTION** — “The translation ‘since you heard’ masks the fact that this is a conditional sentence (‘if ... then’), but the rendering is justified because the first class condition assumes the reality of the protasis (the ‘if’ portion) from the vantage point of the writer. The particle (γε, ge) is added to heighten the emphasis on the protasis. [BDAG: ‘an enclitic particle, appended to the word or words it refers to; it serves to ‘focus the attention upon a single idea, and place it, as it were, in the limelight’] The apodosis of this conditional sentence is the previous verse (4:20) and leads to the following result: ‘If, as indeed is the case, you heard Christ ... then you did not learn him in this way.’ The construction conveys no doubt that the readers heard about Christ and were taught in him. Thus, the translations ‘surely you have heard ...’ (NIV), ‘since you have heard ...’ (NLT), and ‘assuming you heard ...’ (HCSB; ESV) are on target.” [Arnold, 285] Others:

*The introductory [ei ge] implies confident assumption.”* [Lincoln, 280]

*“As at 3.2 [ei ge] does not indicate doubt and may be paraphrased, ‘At any rate if you have heard ... as I know you have.’”* [Best, 427]

*“‘If indeed.’ Condition of first class with aorist indicatives here, assumed to be true.”* [Robertson, 540]

*“The introductory ‘if indeed’ does not express doubt, but implies confidence and certainty, since it confirms the preceding assertion about the readers having so learned Christ that they are no longer in the darkness and ignorance of the Gentiles.”* [O’Brien, 325]

*“This is very much like the construction in 3:2.... This particle is important, for if it were excluded it would imply that the Ephesians had not heard of Paul’s ministry even though he had been with them two or three years. It would imply that the writer was a stranger to the Ephesians which, in turn, would cause legitimate questions regarding the Pauline authorship of this letter. However, the enclitic particle gives assurance that the Ephesians had heard about Christ and were taught in him; thus, Paul can exhort them not to live as Gentiles because they ‘learned’ Christ as expressed in the apodosis (v. 20).”* [Hoehner, 594; see also Bruce, 357; Robinson, 147]

*“Just as in 3:2, the (ge) adds emphasis to the (ei), and together the two words communicate an assumption — something Paul knows to be true, but not on the basis of firsthand experience: ‘if, as I assume, you heard him.’ Much had changed in the more than seven years since Paul was last in Ephesus, and even when he was there, some of the Christians in the city had only a loose connection with him (Acts 18:24-28). There is no irony here. Rather, the slight note of uncertainty in the phrase (eige) probably reflects Paul’s knowledge that false understandings of the Christian tradition were abroad (4:14; Col. 2:8-23). It is just possible, he hints, that some of his readers have not heard the Christian message ‘as the truth is in Jesus.’”* [Thielman, 300]

*“ei ge = ‘if so be that,’ ‘if as I assume it to be the case.’ In the form of a delicate supposition it takes it as certain that they did hear.”* [Salmond, 341]

**THE FOLLOWING TWO-FOLD STATEMENT EXPLAINS WHAT IS INVOLVED IN ‘LEARNING CHRIST’ —**

*“The following twofold statement in v. 21, ‘if indeed you have heard of him and were taught in him’, explains more fully what was involved in ‘learning Christ’. The first expression, ‘you heard of him’, draws attention the initial response to Christ, while the second, ‘you were taught in him’, picks up the point of ongoing instruction. [O’Brien, 324f]*

**‘TO HEAR HIM’ IMPLIES INTELLIGENCE AND OBEDIENCE** — There is some minor debate as to whether the sense is ‘heard Him’ or ‘heard about Him.’ There are conflicting statements from the Greek grammarians: Ernest Best, 427, says the grammar proves Paul meant the hearers heard Christ directly, either a reference to Christ speaking through those who preach or by the call of the Spirit to salvation. Andrew Lincoln, 280 (also Harold Hoehner, 595, and Peter O’Brien, 325), says the opposite and that the grammar proves this is confined to those preaching about Christ. But regardless of the fine lines drawn by the grammarians, the NT is consistent in the fact we hear the call of Christ through the preaching of the Word! **“To hear, in this connection, implies intelligence and obedience, as in the**

The goal of theology is the worship of God. The posture of theology is on one’s knees. The mode of theology is repentance.  
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frequently occurring phrase, 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;' and 'Today if ye will hear his voice,' &c., and in a multitude of other cases. To hear the voice of God or of Christ, therefore, is not merely to perceive with the outward ear but to receive with the understanding and the heart." [Hodge, 185] "As with that expression, the implication is that Christ is alive and that when one hears the gospel preached, as Paul assumes his readers have (1:13), one is put in touch with a living person." [Thielman, 301] "Not in living person, but embodied and presented in the apostolical preaching. 1 Cor. i. 23." [Eadie, 334f]

**and in Him were taught** — *καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδιδάχθητε* [kai en autō edidachthēte] — **PAUL ASSUMES BELIEVERS WILL CONTINUE TO LEARN AFTER 'HEARING' CHRIST** — "Paul assumes that after his readers heard and believed the gospel, they continued to learn more about the Christian tradition. He not only gives this kind of instruction to the Christian communities he has established through his own preaching (1 Thess. 4:2, 11; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6; 1 Cor. 11:2); he also assumes that it is a standard feature of Christianity generally (Rom. 6:17)." [Thielman, 301]

*'But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.'* (Rom 6:17 NKJV)

**just as truth is in Jesus,** — *καθὼς ἐστὶν ἀλήθεια ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ* [kathōs estin alētheia en tō Iēsou] — "But the Apostle was well aware that his language was new, and he adds a clause which helps to interpret it: 'even as the truth is in Jesus', or more literally, 'even as truth is in Jesus.' He lays much stress on truth throughout the whole context. He has already called for the maintenance of the truth in opposition to the subtleties of error (4:15): he will presently speak of the new man as 'created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the truth' (4:24f); and, led on by the word, he will require his readers as the first practical duty of the new life to put away falsehood and speak truth each to his neighbour. **But truth is embodied in Jesus, who is the Christ. Hence, instead of saying 'ye have learned the truth, ye have heard the truth, ye have been taught in the truth', he says with a far more impressive emphasis, 'It is Christ whom ye have learned, Him ye have heard, in Him ye have been taught, even as the truth is in Jesus'.**" [Robinson, 147f] "Paul affirms that 'there is truth in Jesus' not only because this is what Jesus himself taught (John 14:6), but also because deceitfulness was a hallmark feature of the former manner of life (Eph 4:22). Truth is what the Gentiles gave up when they rejected the one true God and followed a lifestyle of lies and self-pursuits (Rom 1:25; 2:8). By receiving Christ into their lives, the readers have now received the truth (Eph 1:13; see also Col 1:5-6; 2 Thess 2:10)." [Arnold, 285] "The historical name of the Saviour is employed, as if to show that this truth had dwelt with humanity, and in Him whom, as Christ, the apostles preached, and whom these Ephesians had heard and learned. **We find the apostle commencing his hideous portraiture of the heathen world by an assertion that they were the victims of mental vanity, that they had darkened intellects, and that there was ignorance in them. But those believers, who had been brought over from among them into the fold of Christ, were enlightened by the truth as well as guided by it, and must have felt the power and presence of that truth in the illumination of their minds as well as in the renewal of their hearts and the direction of their lives.**" [Eadie, 337] "'In accordance with the truth that is in Jesus' (lit., 'just as truth is in Jesus') should not suggest information about Jesus. **Paul's point is that Jesus embodies and encompasses the truth. Find Jesus and you find truth. Find truth and you find Jesus. Truth does not exist apart from him.** This is not surprising, given the expectation in 1:10 that all things will be summed up in Christ." [Snodgrass, 232] "Life without God leads to cynicism about truth. **The ungodly person may ask rhetorically with Pilate, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38), but he expects no satisfactory answer. The Christian, however, can say, 'The truth of Christ is in me' (2 Cor. 11:10) and 'We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ' (1 John 5:20).** The truth that is in Jesus, then, is first of all the truth about salvation. This idea is parallel to 1:13, where Paul says hearing the truth and being in Him are synonymous with conversion: 'In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.' The truth . . . is in Jesus and it leads to the fullness of truth about God, man, creation, history, sin, righteousness, grace, faith, salvation, life, death, purpose, meaning, relationships, heaven, hell, judgment, eternity, and everything else of ultimate consequence. John summed up this relationship with truth when he wrote: 'And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life' (1 John 5:20)." [MacArthur, 175] "**It only remains, therefore, to fall back on the interpretation 'if ye were instructed according to that which is truth in Jesus'. The clause will then describe the nature or manner of the instruction, as the following clause expresses its substance. In form or character the instruction was in accordance with what was true, with what was truth as in Jesus, that is to say, with truth as seen embodied in Him.**" [Salmond, 342]

**THIS LEARNING OF CHRIST COMES THROUGH WORD OF GOD** — "This fellowship is based on the Word of God. I can be taught 'the truth' as it is in Jesus Christ **The better I understand the Word of God, the better I know the Son of God, for the whole Bible is a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ** (Luke 24:27; John 5:39). The unsaved man is spiritually ignorant, while the Christian is intelligent in the things of the Word. And the unsaved man does not know Christ, while the believer grows in his personal knowledge of Christ day by day. We have believed the truth; we have received the life; therefore, we will walk 'in the way' and not walk after the example of the unsaved world." [Wiesbe, 39]

**'YE HEARD AND YE WERE TAUGHT' AT THE MOMENT OF SALVATION** — Both verbs ('ye heard' and 'ye were taught') are in the aorist tense, suggesting a point of hearing / teaching in time past. Ernest Best calls this 'troublesome' because of its tense and the way the pronoun is associated with it. [Best, 427f] One explanation might be that they were 'taught' in a period of catechesis preceding baptism which was normal in the centuries after the founding of the churches. But there are two problems

with that; one being whether this existed in the time of Ephesians. Secondly, if such a catechismal period existed when Paul wrote, the aorist tense suggests a fixed period of time which would be inappropriate for readers who would still be undergoing such instruction. Paul also would not have used this tense to refer to normal Christian teaching since the deepening of faith never ends, especially since Paul just emphasized the need to mature (4:13ff). “Why then has it been used? *The two verbs of hearing and being taught may refer to the same event of becoming a Christian looked at from distinct angles.* Acceptance of Christ implies not only some relation to him but also acceptance of some understanding of who he is and what he has done, i.e. the acceptance of some body, however slender, of doctrine.... *The aorist tense suggests the hearing is that of the time of conversion.*” [Best, 427f] “*The reference is primarily to the readers’ initial reception of this message (cf. 1:13, ‘having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation’; also Rom 10:14; 15:21; Col 1:6, 23).*” [Lincoln, 280] “*The inceptive aorist points to the time of conversion. Gentiles and Jews who had previously opposed God, heard Christ preached and received him. This then is the beginning point of their ‘learning Christ.’ Believers continually ‘learn’ Christ who is alive and seated at the right hand of God in the heavenlies (1:20; 2:6). The new person’s ordered life is not concerned with learning the law but rather hearing about and thus ‘learning’ the living Christ and ordering his or her life to please him.*” [Hoehner, 594] “Instead of being ignorant of God’s truth, the Christian has heard Christ and is taught in Him. *Both verbs are in the aorist tense, again pointing to a one-time past act,* and in this context referring to the time when the readers were taught and came to believe the gospel — here called ‘the truth ... in Jesus.’ *These terms describe the moment of salvation-conversion. When a person receives Christ as Savior and Lord, he comes into God’s truth.*” [MacArthur, 174f]

**TAUGHT ‘IN HIM’, AGAIN POINTING TO OUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LIVING CHRIST —** “*Not only had they heard about Christ but they were also taught in him. This does not express means, ‘taught by him,’ as suggested in the AV because the Ephesians never saw Christ. Rather, it is the sphere or locale of the teaching, ‘in connection with him’ or ‘in communion with him.’ Hence, Christ is the object and the sphere of a believer’s learning.... This is in contrast to many religions whereby followers may continue to study about their chosen religion but never experience an intimate knowledge of their leader and/or founder of their religion. Believers in Christ not only ‘learn’ Christ at the time they heard the gospel but they continue to ‘learn’ him as they study God’s Word and as they are ministered to by gifted people in the body.*” [Hoehner, 595] “*The qualifying phrase [in him] reveals, however, that once again Paul is referring to more than learning information about Christ. The teaching has taken place in the sphere marked out by the living Christ and thus in a way that is possible only for those who have a relationship with him.*” [Thielman, 301] “It is unusual for ‘in him’ to modify ‘you were taught.’ Here again the language probably underlines the relational dimension and stresses the readers’ present connection to the Lord.” [Arnold, 285]

The closer we are to  
God, the more the  
slightest sin will cause  
us deep sorrow.

R.C. Sproul

**KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS INCONSISTENT WITH SIN —** “The clause ... rendered in our version as *the truth is in Jesus*, is variously explained. The interpretation intimated above supposes καθώς [kathōs] to have its frequent causal sense, ‘since,’ ‘inasmuch as;’ and ‘truth’ to mean moral truth, or excellence. This sense it very often has. It frequently means true religion, and is used antithetically to unrighteousness, as in Rom. ii. 8. *The principle here involved is, that knowledge of God is inconsistent with a life of sin, because knowledge implies love, and God is holy. To know him, therefore, is to love holiness. The apostle’s argument is: ‘if you know Christ you will forsake sin, because he is holy; truth, i.e., moral excellence is in him. If you have been taught any thing in virtue of your communion with him, you have been taught to put off the old man.’* Another interpretation supposes [kathōs] to mean ‘as,’ expressing the manner: ‘If ye have been taught as the truth is in Jesus,’ i.e. correctly taught. But this requires the article even in English — *the truth*, meaning the definite system of truth which Jesus taught. In the Greek, however, the article necessary to give colour to this interpretation is wanting. Besides, the expression ‘*the truth is in Jesus*’ is obscure and unscriptural, if

truth be taken to mean true doctrine. And more than this, this interpretation supposes there may be a true and false teaching ‘by,’ or in communion with, Christ. This cannot be. The apostle’s hypothesis is, not whether Christ has taught them correctly, but whether he has taught them at all. A third interpretation makes the following infinitive the subject of the sentence: ‘*Truth in Jesus is to put off the old man.*’ The meaning of the whole passage would then be, ‘*if you know Christ ye cannot live as the heathen, for truth in Jesus is to put away sin,*’ i.e., true fellowship with Christ is to put off, &c. But this violates the natural construction of the passage.... And the expression, ‘*It is truth in Jesus to put away sin,*’ is in itself awkward and obscure. The first mentioned interpretation, therefore, is on the whole to be preferred.” [Hodge, 186f]

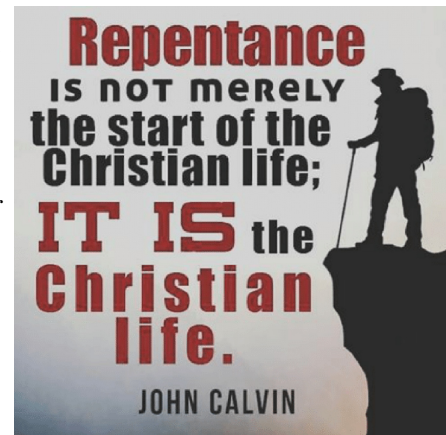
**PAUL’S ONLY USE OF ‘JESUS’ IN EPHESIANS —** “*The fact that Paul uses the name ‘Jesus’ here instead of ‘Christ’ or ‘Jesus Christ’ may be an intentional way of connecting the truth about the resurrected and reigning Christ to the historical Jesus. They are one and the same person. It is just as important to learn the truth he taught and embodied during his earthly ministry as it is to learn the truth about him in early Christian preaching and tradition. This statement thus a strong endorsement of the Jesus tradition that is being passed on in the churches.*” [Arnold, 285] “This might simply be a stylistic variation with little or no significance, but it is the only place in the letter where the name ‘Jesus’ is used alone. Most commentators are probably correct, then, in thinking that *Paul places special emphasis here on the foundation of Christian teaching, particularly its ethics, in the teaching and conduct of Jesus during his earthly ministry* (cf. 4:32; 5:2).” [Thielman, 302] “‘Jesus’ cannot be passed over as a stylistic variation; for this a pronoun would have sufficed. [Paul] has then gone out of



his way to introduce the name. The name Jesus appears rarely in the Pauline corpus (Rom 3.26; 8.11; 1 Cor 12.3; 2 Cor 4.5, 10, 11, 14; 11.4; Gal 6.17; Phil 2.10; 1 Th 1.10; 4.14). Its presence here excludes any idea that the instruction is solely about the exalted Christ (e.g. that he intercedes in heaven for believers). At the other extreme, as it were, it is probably not intended to indicate that the instruction is based on the life and teaching of the historical Jesus; when the letter moves on to detailed moral instruction there is, in accordance with the normal trend in the Pauline corpus, no attempt to relate this to the earthly Jesus. Yet the use of ‘Jesus’ suggests the historical person.” [Best, 429f] “A second unusual feature is the use of the name ‘Jesus,’ the only occasion in Ephesians where it occurs by itself (though cf. ‘Lord Jesus’ in 1:15). The change from the title ‘Christ’ seems to be deliberate, not because the name ‘Jesus’ was aimed at Gnostic teaching with its division between the heavenly Christ and the earthly Jesus, but in order to stress that the *historical* Jesus is himself the embodiment of the truth. The apostle reminds his readers that the instruction they had received in the gospel tradition was indeed ‘the truth as it is in Jesus.’” [O’Brien, 326; see also Bruce, 357; Eadie, 337; Snodgrass, 232; Robinson, 148]

**SUMMARY** — “[I]n this final clause of 4:20-21, Paul describes to his readers the manner in which he assumes they have been taught the Christian tradition. He thinks and hopes that their teaching has been consistent with the truth as it is found in the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Paul is aware of other, erroneous forms of teaching about Jesus (4:14-15; cf. Col. 2:8-23), but he trusts that the foundation of his readers’ faith was laid by the apostles with their connection to the historical Jesus. Even if most of his readers have heard the gospel and were encouraged in the faith through the work of prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (2:20; 3:5; 4:11), what they heard and believed, he assumes, was nevertheless the apostolic ‘word of truth’ (1:13). **In 4:20-21, then, Paul begins to set Christian teaching in contrast to a Gentile worldview. To guide their lives, Christians have both a relationship with the living Christ and concrete instruction, derived from the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. The shape of their lives, thus guided, stands utterly apart from the hopeless and socially destructive behavior of their unbelieving Gentile neighbors.**” [Thielman, 302]

**vv. 22~24** — “*The injunctions which St Paul has hitherto laid upon his readers have been gentle admonitions, arising directly out of the great thoughts which he has been expounding to them. His first injunction was : Remember what you were and what you are (2:11f). The next was : Cultivate that humble and forbearing temper, which naturally belongs to what you are, which tends to keep the unity (4:2ff). But now his demand takes a severer tone : I protest in the Lord, he says, that you be not what you were.*” [Robinson, 149] “*In 4:17-24, Paul says that the lives of his readers should reflect the dramatic transformation that has taken place in them at their conversion. They should no longer live in a way that speaks of the confusion, demonic control, and despair that characterize those who are estranged from the life God provides. They should instead live in ways that show their thinking is continually being renewed spiritually and that reveal their re-creation in the image of a God who is righteous and holy.*” [Thielman, 307] “*On the basis of their relationship with Christ and their new identity in him, Paul calls these believers to rid themselves of every corrupt practice that was a part of their former life. In essence, he calls them to an ongoing process of complete repentance.*” [Arnold, 285]



*‘But as for you, not in this manner did you learn the Christ, since, indeed, as is the case, you heard and in Him were taught just as truth is in Jesus, that you have put off once for all with reference to your former manner of life the old self who is being corrupted according to the passionate desires of deceit; moreover, that you are being constantly renewed with reference to the spirit of your mind; and that you have put on once for all the new self who after God was created in righteousness and holiness of truth.’* (Ephesians 4:20-24, Kenneth Wuest’s Expanded Translation, 1961)

**OVERVIEW** — Wuest brings some things out in his translation that highlights some of the difficulties in these next couple verses. Forgive the detailed grammar but it is important to the discussion of these verses:

- These verses center around three infinitives: *put off ... renew ... put on*. The first and last infinitives are aorists while the second is in the present tense. That explains why Kenneth Wuest translates the verses as follows:

*‘That you have put off once for all ...*

*That you are being constantly renewed ...*

*That you have put on once for all ...’*

- One of the questions concerns the exact force of Paul’s comments: are these commands (imperatives) given by Paul or are they mere statements of fact (indicatives)?
- Another question which relates to the second is if we are to understand these things as relating to our salvation (justification) or our everyday Christian life (sanctification)?

“In 4:22-24 Paul uses three infinitives to specify what his readers were taught. From the forms of these verbs, it is not possible to tell whether the original instruction consisted of statements or commands. ***Were Paul’s readers taught that the transformation of their lives has already happened or that it should happen?***” [Thielman, 302; see also Snodgrass, 232f: “*At issue is whether*



*these transforming actions are viewed as past or still to be performed.”]*

**THESE THREE INFINITIVES ARE NOT PURELY COMMANDS** — Some translations understand these infinitives as pure commands. (*NOTE: we understand there is a sense in which all translations are commentaries, do we not? Every translator has decisions to make as they translate from one language to another and the theological biases do influence their translation. All translations!*) Consider the New Living Translation:

*‘But that isn’t what you learned about Christ. Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God — truly righteous and holy.’ (Eph 4:20-24, NLT)*

But for the reasons which follow, I do not think it probable that these infinitives should be taken as imperatives (commands).

**THESE INFINITIVES RELATE BACK TO ‘TAUGHT’ IN v. 21** — Taking these as pure commands destroys the relationship between these three infinitives and ‘*you were taught*’.

*“If the infinitives were intended to specify the content of the teaching in verse 21, it ought strictly to be translated: ‘You were taught that you have put away, are being renewed, and have put on.’”* [Muddiman, 217]

*“All three of the following infinitive clauses depend on the verb ‘you were taught’ and are best described as epexegetical (explanatory) infinitives; that is, they spell out the content of that teaching. In saying that ‘you were taught ... take off the old self,’ there is an implied imperatival force. It is going too far, however, to interpret them as essentially imperatival infinitives (see NLT and KJV) because this misses the dependent relationship on ‘you were taught.’”* [Arnold, 286]

*“Before any comment can be made on the content of the verses, a decision about the place of these infinitives in the syntax must be made.... [It is] most likely that the infinitives are to be taken as a further explanation of the content of the teaching.”* [Lincoln, 283f]

*“The content of the Christian instruction they had been given, and which is found in the person of Jesus (v. 21), is now amplified in vv. 22-24 by means of three infinitives: ‘to put off’ (v. 22), ‘to be renewed’ (v. 23), and ‘to put on’ (v. 24). Although these infinitives have been taken as imperatives, as indicating the purpose of the instruction, or as denoting the result of the readers’ being taught, it seems best to treat them as epexegetic and therefore as spelling out three fundamental aspects of the gospel tradition which had been passed on to them. The NIV represents this interpretation by repeating *You were taught* of v. 21, and then continuing, *with regard to your former way of life, to put off . . .* (v. 22); *to be made new . . .* (v. 23); *and to put on . . .* (v. 24). The readers have been instructed that to become believers signifies a fundamental break with the past. At the same time, in this exhortatory context the three infinitives also seem to have an implied imperatival force, not in the sense that the readers are to repeat the event of putting off the old person and putting on the new, but in terms of their continuing to live out the implications of their mighty break with the past.”* [O’Brien, 326f]

**IF PAUL MEANT THESE TO BE COMMANDS, WHY NOT JUST USE THE IMPERATIVE MOOD?** — If imperatives, why not just use imperatives? Paul follows in v. 25ff using eleven imperatives (Hoehner); if these were pure commands, why not just use imperatives? *“In fact, in this chapter there are no imperatives before verse 25 but there are eleven imperatives in verses 25-32. If verses 22-24 are imperatival, then verses 25-32 would seem to be redundant.”* [Hoehner, 601]

**BUT IS THAT TO IMPLY THERE IS NO COMMAND IMPLIED IN THESE INFINITIVES?** — The commentators have written much on this topic, each struggling to provide proper balance.

*“In a slightly different way, but obtaining the same result, [John] Stott sees the infinitives as originally having an imperatival force, but only when Paul originally proclaimed the gospel to them. In other words, Paul is giving not fresh commands, but old ones that he proclaimed when he was with them. Thus, when they responded to his teaching and were converted, they took off the old self and put the new.”* [Arnold, 286]

*“Teaching may consist in the simple giving of information or it may imply that action based on the information should follow (contrast the statements ‘You were taught that Greek changed during the centuries’ and ‘You were taught to wear clean clothes’).”* [Best, 431] In the second example, it is not a command but we are to respond to what we were taught.

*“It is important to note that Paul is not here exhorting believers to do these things. These three infinitives describe the saving truth in Jesus and are not imperatives directed to Christians. They are done at the point of conversion, and are mentioned here only as a reminder of the reality of that experience. Lay aside the old self is related to ‘have heard . . . and have been taught’ in the gospel (v. 21). It should also be noted that, although it is essential to affirm that salvation is a divine and sovereign miracle apart from any human contribution, it must also be affirmed that men do hear and believe and lay aside the old while putting on the new. The saving act of God effects such responses in the believing soul. These are not human works required for divine salvation but inherent elements of the divine work of salvation. Paul’s terms here are basically a description of repentance from sin and submission to God, so often taught as elements of regeneration (see*

Isa. 55:6-7; Matt. 19:16-22; Acts 2:38-40; 20:21; 1 Thess. 1:9; et al.)” [MacArthur, 175f]

“The infinitive is the objective infinitive, – ‘It has something of the force of an imperative, but is not to be taken as the same as an imperative.’” [Salmond, 342]

**HOW PAUL USES ‘PUT OFF / PUT ON’ IN OTHER PASSAGES** — Relevant to our discussion is how Paul uses these terms in other passages, the most important being Colossians:

*“But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”* (Col 3:8-16 ESV)

Forms of our same words in Ephesians are used in Colossians 3:9,10 (in Colossians they are aorist participles). Kenneth Wuest translates this as follows:

*“Stop lying to one another, having stripped off and away from yourselves and for your own advantage the old, antiquated, outworn, decrepit, useless man [that person you were before you were saved] with his evil practices, and having clothed yourselves with the new man [the person you are after you are saved] who is constantly being renewed, with a resulting advanced and perfect experiential knowledge which is according to the image of the One who created him”* (Col 3:9, 10 Wuest Expanded Translation)

**The sense we are to stop sinful behavior based upon our past single event of salvation (‘having put off the old self / having put on the new self’). Ernest Best points out the aorist participles refer to a past event. Per Clinton Arnold, Paul is stressing their new identity in Christ to be a vital perspective and enabling factor in living the Christian life. Klyne Snodgrass says ‘do not lie’ is based on the fact that ‘the old person has been taken off’. “The intent in Ephesians may be the same, for these words are a theological reminder to motivate the ethical material that follows (note ‘therefore’ in v. 25).”** [Snodgrass, 233]

Other similar texts:

*‘Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints’* (Eph 6:11-17 ESV)

*‘But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.’* (1 Thes 5:8 ESV)

*‘The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.’* (Rom 13:12-14 ESV)

*‘In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.’* (Col 2:11 ESV)

*‘for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.’* (Gal 3:27 ESV) **NOTE ON THE COLOSSIANS AND GALATIANS VERSES: some of our confusion with the New Testament’s emphasis on baptism can be explained by the fact there was no such thing as an un-baptized believer in the New Testament!**

**RETURNING THEREFORE TO THE QUESTION: DOES THIS REFER TO A PAST EXPERIENCE OR A PRESENT COMMAND UPON BELIEVERS? THE ANSWER PROBABLY WOULD BE: BOTH!! THESE ARE FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE ‘ALREADY / NOT YET’ TENSION THAT EXISTS IN BELIEVERS** — *“The solution lies in seeing these two texts as accurately displaying the tension between the indicative and imperative in Paul’s writings, or, as some*

have referred to it, the eschatological tension of the ‘already’ and ‘not yet.’ This is a fundamental structure in Paul’s thought. He balances the ‘indicative’ of the work of Christ on our behalf and the resultant change in our identity with the ‘imperative’ that calls for us to actualize in our day-to-day lives what is already true of us in Christ. Thus, Paul can regularly call believers ‘saints’, yet admonish them to pursue sanctification (1 Thess 4:3, 4, 7; cf. Rom 6:19, 22). Similarly, in Colossians, Paul can stress that believers ‘have been filled’ with the fullness of God (2:9 - 10) and yet pray in Ephesians that the believers might be filled with the fullness of God (Eph 3:19). ***The key to interpreting these statements is understanding the proper relationship of what has already happened in Christ with what Christ is yet calling his people to do. A real change has already taken place by virtue of one’s incorporation into Christ and participation in his death, resurrection, and ascension. Yet until Christ returns, these will not be fully realized characteristics in the daily experience of believers. Thus, there is no contradiction when Paul says to the Colossians that ‘you have taken off your old self’ (Col 3:9) and then tells the Ephesians that they still need to take off the old self (4:22). Both are true. The former statement affirms the new identity of believers in terms of their participation in the death of Christ. Because of their incorporation into Christ, their old self was crucified with Christ (Rom 6:6). Yet now believers need to align their day-to-day lives with the reality of who they are in Christ. Dunn is correct in saying that ‘Paul can hardly have intended to imply that “the old nature” (Rom 6:6) had been totally destroyed, that there was nothing in the believer for sin to exert its influence over, that the old age was wholly past.’ The ‘old self’ still lingers as does ‘the flesh,’ in spite of the fact that Paul says it, too, has been crucified (Gal 5:24). Paul then appeals to the believers in and around Ephesus to rid themselves of everything related to the old self.*** [Arnold, 286f] ***“This tension between the indicative and the imperative, between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet,’ is common in the Pauline letters; it is summed up in the admonition: ‘Be what you are!’ — Be in practice what the calling of God has made you. Because the people of God are holy by calling, they are to be holy in life.”*** [Bruce, 357f] ***“Once again the now and not-yet character of Christian faith is obvious. A change has already occurred, is occurring, and will be completed at the end of time.”*** [Snodgrass, 241] For example: a queen speaking to a young prince: ‘you are royalty; ACT LIKE IT!’

Addendum: One of the best illustrations of this concept was given to me by a fine Christian brother after one of our Sunday School classes. When someone joins the military, they stand before an officer, raise their right hand and swear an oath to protect the constitution of the United States. From the moment of that ceremony, that person is in the military with all the benefits and obligations contained therein. But from there that person is taken to boot camp as an introduction on living the military life; indeed, the learning of what it means to be in the military never ends. What a beautiful illustration of living the Christian life: the Holy Spirit makes us alive in Christ and from that moment we are His and that will never change. But how we are to live this Christian life is a life-long learning process!

**vv. 22~24** — *‘But as for you, not in this manner did you learn the Christ, since, indeed, as is the case, you heard and in Him were taught just as truth is in Jesus, that you have put off once for all with reference to your former manner of life the old self who is being corrupted according to the passionate desires of deceit; moreover, that you are being constantly renewed with reference to the spirit of your mind; and that you have put on once for all the new self who after God was created in righteousness and holiness of truth.’* (Ephesians 4:20-24, Kenneth Wuest’s Expanded Translation, 1961)

**OVERVIEW** — These verses center around three infinitives: *put off ... renew ... put on*. The first and last infinitives are aorists while the second is in the present tense. That explains why Kenneth Wuest translates the verses as follows:

*‘That you have put off once for all ...*

*That you are being constantly renewed ...*

*That you have put on once for all ...’*

**‘PUT OFF / ON’ WAS A COMMON METAPHOR USED OF CLOTHING** — Paul’s use of *‘take off / put on’* is a common metaphor used throughout Scripture of *‘taking off / putting on clothing.’* As such, ***the metaphor refers to ‘putting on’ (i.e., adopting, to make our own) certain qualities such as strength, righteousness, honor, majesty, and virtue; or ‘taking off, putting off’ the human being (i.e., to renounce, to remove from us as garments are laid aside, to strip off, to work against instinctive human habits.*** “The phrase appears in the humorous story of a dog chasing the philosopher Pyrrhon in terror up a tree. As a Skeptic, Pyrrhon was supposed to remain calm in the face of such emergencies, and when confronted with the inconsistency between his touted philosophy and his behavior, he apparently responded that it was difficult to ‘put off the human being.’” [Thielman, 304] Paul is using these terms here in like manner, *‘putting off’* the old man which behaves according to *‘the desires of deceit’* (v. 22) and *‘putting on’* the new man that behaves as the Lord intended with *‘righteousness and holiness of the truth’* (v. 24). It is often used in both the Old Testament (2 Chron 6:41; Job 29:14; 35:26; 40:10; Pss. 93:1; 104:1; 132:9; Isa 51:9; 52:1; 59:17; 61:10) and the New Testament. Besides our passages in Ephesians and Colossians, it is used in reference to various vices (Rom 13:12; 1 Pet 2:1; Heb 12:1; Jas 1:21; 1 Thess 5.5; Eph 6.11) and of the nature of existence after death (1 Cor 15.53f; 2 Cor 5.2-4). It is used in rabbinic literature and Hellenistic Judaism (e.g., Philo: *On Drunkenness* 7.86; *Letter of Aristeas* 122-124; *Fuga et Invent* 110; Targum Levi 8.2; 1 Enoch 62.14-16), and Greek philosophy (e.g.,

We do not sin simply because of Satan or because of social deprivation, stressful situations, bad influences, or any other external cause. Those things may tempt us to sin and make sinning easier, but when we commit sin - or even intend to commit sin - it is because we decide to sin. Sin is an act of the will.

- John MacArthur Topics: Sin



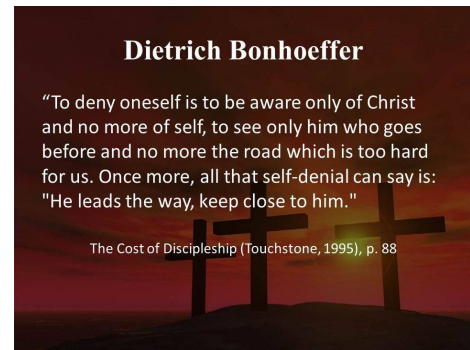
Plato, Republic 5.457a). [see Best, 431f; Hoehner, 603; Lincoln, 284f; O'Brien, 327; Thielman, 303f; MacArthur, 176; Hodge, 187] ***“The simplest illustration of this great truth is given in John 11, the resurrection of Lazarus. Our Lord’s friend, Lazarus, had been in the grave four days when Jesus and His disciples arrived at Bethany, and even Martha admitted that, by now, the decaying body would smell (John 11:39). But Jesus spoke the word and Lazarus came forth alive, an illustration of John 5:24. Notice our Lord’s next words: ‘Loose him, and let him go’ (John 11:44). Take off the graveclothes! Lazarus no longer belonged to the old dominion of death, for he was now alive. Why go about wearing graveclothes? Take off the old and put on the new!”*** [Wiersbe, 40]

**IS PAUL MAKING A REFERENCE TO OUR BAPTISM?** — There have been those throughout Christian history that understands the *‘taking off/ putting on’* as a reference to what happens in our baptism. This is understandable since Paul writes in Galatians: *‘for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.’* (Gal 3:27 ESV) There is also historical evidence of the *‘removal of clothing and the replacement of clothing’* during the baptism ritual in the centuries following Christ. But Paul’s statement here probably does not any connection with our baptism for the following reasons:

- there is no mention of baptism in our immediate Ephesian passage
- there is no clear evidence of undressing / re-dressing for baptism until well into the second century (some would say the third century); and when it does appear, the ritual involves the taking off and putting on the same set of clothes while wearing a white garment for baptism, not putting away the old clothes and putting on different garments.

Since the metaphor of *‘putting off/ putting on’* clothing is well attested to in both Scripture and non-Biblical writings, there is no need to resort to such an interpretation. [see Best, 431, 433; Thielman, 302f]

**THE ‘OLD MAN’ (OUR POSITION AND OUR CONDITION)** — The ‘old man’ is used in New Testament to refer to both our position (in Adam) and our condition (our present condition, or indwelling sin). I believe there to be a sense in which both are referred to by Paul in our verses. As we have mentioned above, most consider *‘put off’* and *‘put on’* to point to a singular action. While explanations differ as to what Paul meant by using this grammar, the explanation I like best is that it refers to our salvation (our position: we were *‘in Adam’* but now are *‘in Christ’*). But between these two aorist infinitives is a present passive infinitive, *‘to be renewed.’* In sharp contrast with the singular action of the two aorists is the continued action of the present tense, emphasizing the continual renewing of ourselves.



This same paradox may be found elsewhere. Note how often our having been positionally placed in Christ as a basis for us living according to our position:

*‘We know that our old self was crucified with him [our position] in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. [our present sanctification]’ (Rom 6:6 ESV)*

*‘Those who are in the flesh [our former position in Adam] cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, [our present position in Christ] if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.’ (Rom 8:8-10 ESV)*

*‘For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. [our position] It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.’ [our present sanctification]’ (Gal 2:19,20 ESV)*

*‘But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.’ (Gal 6:14 ESV)*

The passage most parallel to our present verses is in Colossians:

*‘Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.’ (Col 3:9,10 ESV) Note Paul says ‘we should not lie’ because we have ‘put off our old self’ and ‘put on the new self.’*

Comments from others:

***The ‘old man’ refers to ‘the manner of life’ that defined the existence of Paul’s readers before they believed the gospel. This is described in 2:1-3 and 4:17-19. “Both passages depict an existence characterized by numbness, ignorance, and rebellion against God, of people led to destruction by evil powers and inward rebellions that they are helpless to remedy.”*** [Thielman, 304]

***“It is a way of referring to believers in terms of their solidarity with Adam in his sin. He was the representative of humanity in its disobedience, sinfulness, and rebellion against God. Conversely, Christ is now the representative of the new humanity, the new creation ‘in Christ.’ ‘The old self’ is an expression of community identity — all were***

*once fallen and dead in their transgressions and sins (Eph 2:1- 2), but it also refers to the vestiges of that identity that remain in each individual. These sinful traits need to be stripped off; their influence needs to be defeated.” [Arnold, 287]*

*“This former conversation is plainly their previous heathen or unconverted state. The apostle says, they were not now to live like the rest of heathendom, for they had been instructed to put off as regards their manner of life, ‘the old man.’ ... The words are, therefore, a bold and vivid personification of the old nature we inherit from Adam, the source and seat of original and actual transgression.” [Eadie, 339]*

*“The ‘old man’ is the sum-total of their former practices, propensities, and attitudes; he is a prey to harmful desires which beguile people into sin and error. Corruption and destruction are consequently working themselves out in him; they must bid him a long and final farewell.” [Bruce, 358]*

*“The old person, found in Rom 6:6 and Col 3:9, is the preconversion unregenerate person. Paul then is teaching that, having been taught in him, believers should know that the old person according to the former lifestyle was laid aside at the time of their faith in the one who taught them, namely, Christ.” [Hoehner, 605]*

*“This original principle of evil is not destroyed in regeneration, but is to be daily mortified, in the conflicts of a whole life.” [Hodge, 188]*

“Paul’s reference to the old self (old in the sense of worn out and useless) is consistent with gospel terminology in his other epistles. For example, Colossians 3 describes the fact of salvation using four verbs: ‘for you *have died* and your life is hidden with Christ in God’ (v. 3); ‘you *have been raised up*’ (v. 1); ‘you *laid aside* the old self man’ (v. 9); and you ‘*have put on* the new self [ man] who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him’ (v. 10; emphasis added). All four verbs are in the aorist tense in the Greek, indicating that they refer back to already completed action and must therefore refer to the same past event of salvation.” [MacArthur, 176]

**WHAT IS ‘THE NEW SELF’?** — Some comments relating to ‘the new self’:

*“The ‘new man’ is a reference to believers in terms of being ‘in Christ’, the representative of the new humanity.... As a consequence of ridding themselves of the defining features of their old identity, the Ephesians are to live their lives in conformity with their new identity. This is characterized by traits of God himself — true righteousness and holiness.... This ‘new self’ is a new identity that these believers have already acquired at the time of their conversion (Col 3:10) when they were sealed with the Spirit (Eph 1:13) and were joined to Christ in his death, resurrection, and ascension (2:5 - 6). The new self is who believers now are in terms of their solidarity with Christ. Nevertheless, Paul calls them to put on this new identity. This amounts to a daily and growing recognition of the truth of who they are now Christ Jesus. It also involves an actualization of this identity in their daily experience through a transformed way of thinking (4:23) and bringing their lives into conformity with the defining characteristics of this new identity — righteousness and holiness.” [Arnold, 287, 289f]*

*“[T]his is an issue of our identity. Conversion is a renunciation of a self-centered identity in favor of a Christ-defined identity. All that shapes us is given over to Christ, and his mindset of self-giving love becomes our mindset. Conversion is the restructuring of a person’s thinking by the Holy Spirit as the result of a direct encounter with the love of God in the person of Christ. Otherwise, we are not Christians. In effect, we take off what we thought was life and put on Christ. As Robinson commented, ‘He has displaced me in myself’ (cf. Gal. 2:20).” [Snodgrass, 240]*

“Affirming the truth of these four aspects of conversion is the basis for the exhortations in the Colossian passage. Paul is describing salvation to the Colossians exactly as he does to the Ephesians. Although in Ephesians he does not refer specifically to the believer’s union in the death and resurrection of Christ, he does allude to that reality when saying that the one who believes is ‘in Him?’ His references to the old self and the new self in both passages are obviously parallel. This perspective is further proved by Paul’s teaching in Romans 6, where he describes the nature of salvation, with emphasis on verbs: ‘we . . . *died* to sin’ (v. 2); ‘all of us . . . *have been baptized* into Christ Jesus’ (v. 3); ‘*have been buried* with Him . . . into death’ (v. 4); ‘we *have become united* with Him in . . . His death’ (v. 5); ‘our old self *was crucified* with Him’ (v. 6); ‘our body of sin *might be done away with*’ (v. 6); ‘he who *has died*’ (v. 7); and ‘we *have died* with Christ’ (v. 8; emphasis added). Eight of those nine verbs are aorist in the Greek, looking back at an already accomplished event. One is in the perfect tense (v. 5), seeing the result of that past event. Again, Paul gives his exhortation on the basis of this description of the complete transformation of the believer at conversion (cf. Rom. 6:12-23). **The inescapable conclusion from what Paul says in Romans and Colossians is that salvation is a spiritual union with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection that can also be described as the death of the ‘old self’ and the resurrection of the ‘new self,’ who now walks in ‘newness of life.’ This union and new identity clearly means that salvation is transformation.**



***It is not the addition of a new self to an old self. In Christ, the old self no longer exists (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). That is what the Ephesians heard and were taught according to the truth in Jesus (4:21). The old self is the unconverted nature, described as being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit. The old self of the unbeliever not only is corrupt but is increasingly being corrupted (present passive), because it is the tool for evil desire which is controlled by deceit (cf. 2:1-3). The gospel invitation is to lay the old self aside in repentance from sin that includes not just sorrow about sin but a turning from sin to God.*** [MacArthur, 176f]

“[It is not that they are] to continue putting on the new man, but that they should conduct their lives in the light of the mighty change God had effected.” [O’Brien, 331]

“Replacement of the old with the new occurred at a point in time, namely, conversion. The result is a qualitative difference in lifestyle as depicted in this text.” [Hoehner, 610]

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ‘DIE TO OURSELVES’?** — Perhaps this simple illustration will help us understand what Jesus means when He says we must ‘die to ourselves’:

- Someone offends us and we want to react naturally (which is how we are used to reacting: selfishly and full of pride)
- We remember Jesus says that reaction is dead, over, it does not control our lives
- Therefore by a conscious choice (at least at first) we **SUBMIT** to the will of Christ and we **OBEY** what God’s word tells us.
- We choose to react in a manner pleasing to God in spite of how we feel!!

Some thoughts:

- we all fail miserably at this; ‘dying to ourselves’ is a growing thing (this is our sanctification)
- this requires knowing the Word of God – we cannot react the way we should if we do not know what Christ says about the situation
- this is a revealing thing: the Lord is constantly using life’s circumstances to reveal our hearts to ourselves
- this ‘dying to ourselves’ is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit – we cannot do this naturally
- when we choose to live according to our emotions, according to our sinful nature, God will allow that but it will bring consequences



**We have sanctification all backwards. We see a command of God and we attempt to obey but when we fail, we either re-read that command in such a way as to be able to ‘obey’ or we quit trying. We think it all depends upon us. Real sanctification is when we fail to obey a clear command from God, it is then that we fall on our faces before Him, acknowledging our weakness and crying out to Him for the strength and grace to obey. Real sanctification is a growing awareness of our weakness and inability to obey Him, and a growing dependence upon Him. The Lord is not seeking those who are proud of their own abilities and ‘righteousness’ but those who rely and rest in Him.**

**v. 22 — ye are to put off concerning the former behaviour the old man, (YLT) — ἀποθέσθαι ὑμᾶς κατὰ τὴν προτέραν ἀναστροφὴν τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον [apothēsthai humas kata tēn proteran anastrophēn ton palaion anthrōpon]** — The prepositional phrase ‘concerning the former behavior’ belongs to ‘ye are to put off’ and not ‘the old man.’ The distinction between the connections is that the ‘old man’ is to be put off in its entirety and not just its manifestations only. [Hodge, 188] “Simply stated, Paul shows that the conduct of the old person is an integral part of the person. Conversely, the lifestyle and the position of the new person should be integrally bound together.” [Hoehner, 605]

**that is corrupt according to the desires of the deceit, (YLT) — τὸν φθειρόμενον κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ἀπάτης [ton phtheiromenon kata tas epithumias tēs apatēs]** — *To corrupt, to ruin, to decay* = the noun form of this word means ‘corruption, depravity’ (2 Pet 1:4; 2:19). It is in the present tense which most commentators readily admit this implies continued action (NKJV: ‘grows corrupt’; NIV, NASB: ‘is being corrupted’; ASV, RV: ‘waxeth corrupt’). Of all that I read, the only exception was Clinton Arnold who said that while it is present tense, it should not be used to imply our ‘old self’ is becoming worse; it is already dead in sin! It should rather be taken to be existing in a state of corruption (rightly, KJV ‘is corrupt’; YLT: ‘that is corrupt’). [Arnold, 287f] One cannot argue with Arnold’s reasoning since Paul stated we were dead in sin just a few chapters before (Eph 2:1). **Perhaps the answer is that while we are indeed ‘dead in sin’ (meaning we are separated from the life of God, Eph 4:18), that state produces a decaying effect in all that we are as human beings.** Comments from others:



*“If 2.1 presented a realised eschatological death, 4.22 presents an eschatological death realising itself. The corruption spoken of here is not of course a destroying of the old person but indicates instead the old person’s increasing reality. This inevitably leads to complete corruption in death, not merely physical but eternal death.”* [Best, 434]

*“The present participle marks the corruption as a process that goes on, a condition that progresses. The point is missed by the ‘is corrupt’ of the AV, but is well put by ‘waxeth corrupt’ (RV); cf. also Gal. vi. 8. The ‘corruption’ however, is to be understood as ‘destruction’. The ‘old man’ is in a condition of advancing destruction or ruin, and, therefore, should all the more be ‘put off’.”* [Salmond, 342]

*“The old man is growing corrupt, and this being his constant condition and characteristic, the present tense is employed — the corruption is becoming more corrupt.... The old man is ‘corrupt,’ filled with that sin which contains in it the elements of its own punishment, and he is unfitted by this condition for serving God, possessing the Divine life, or enjoying happiness.”* [Eadie, 339f]

“The present tense denotes continuing action, which indicates that the corruption continues in the unregenerate person.” [Hoehner, 606]

“The verb ‘corrupt’, which in the active signifies to ‘ruin or destroy something’, is here used in the passive to refer to the ongoing moral corruption of the ‘old person’, a process of decay and ruin that finally ends in death (cf. Rom. 8:21; Gal. 6:8).” [O’Brien, 328]

The old self is depraved ‘in accordance with and due to’ its own deceitful desires. Desires = ἐπιθυμίας [epithumias] = ‘a great desire for something, desire, longing, craving, lust.’ This is used in various ways in our NT:

This could be a **neutral word**; e.g., ‘and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.’ (Mark 4:19 NKJV); ‘The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.’ (Rev 18:14 NKJV)

This could also be used in a **positive way**; e.g., ‘For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.’ (Phil 1:23 NKJV); ‘But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.’ (1Thes 2:17 NKJV); ‘Then He said to them, With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer’ (Luke 22:15 NKJV)

This word as we are used to hearing it is used in a **negative way** (this is our typical understanding for this word ‘lust’); e.g., ‘Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.’ (Col 3:5 NKJV); ‘But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.’ (James 1:14 NASV); ‘by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.’ (2 Pet 1:4 NKJV)

*“The term is a general one, and signifies those strong and self-willed desires and appetites which distinguish unrenewed humanity.”* [Eadie, 340]

**THE DECEPTION OF SIN** — deceitful = τῆς ἀπάτης [tēs apatēs] = is used of ‘the seduction which comes from wealth’ (Matt 13:22); ‘the deceitfulness of sin’ (Heb 3:13); ‘empty deceit’ (Col 2:8); ‘every kind of wicked deception’ (2 Thes 2:10); and ‘They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.’ (2 Pet 2:13 ESV) Note it is not ‘deceitful lusts’ but ‘the lusts which deceit uses or which are its instruments, in accordance with the desires coming from deceit.’ [Salmond, 342; Hoehner, 606]

*“This is the only place that Paul brings these two terms together. He speaks extensively of ‘lusts’ in the sense of intense desires that are stimulated and influenced by the flesh (Rom 13:14; Gal 5:16, 24) or sin (Rom 6:12). Here he refers to these evil desires as stemming from deceit. Sin itself is a deceptive power (Rom 7:11). The serpent’s deception of Eve illustrates this well (Gen 3:1 - 7, 13). The deceitful power of sin stands in opposition to the truth that is in Jesus (4:21b).”* [Arnold, 288; see also O’Brien, 328f; Best, 434]

*“A false perspective on reality generates a confusion of desires which can never be satisfied because they have lost touch with what is true. Such desires serve the power of deceit, and so are themselves ultimately illusory and contribute to the ruin of the old person.”* [Lincoln, 286]

*“Alas ! this deceit is not simply error. It has assumed many guises. It gives a refined name to grossness, calls sensualism gallantry, and it hails drunkenness as good cheer. It promises fame and renown to one class, wealth and power to another, and tempts a third onward by the prospect of brilliant discovery. But genuine satisfaction is never gained, for God is forgotten, and these desires and pursuits leave their victim in disappointment and chagrin. ‘Vanity of vanities,’ cried Solomon in vexation, after all his experiments on the summum, bonum. ‘I will pull down my barns, and build greater,’ said another in the idea that he had ‘much goods laid up for many years;’ and yet, in the very night of his fond imaginings, ‘his soul was required of him.’ Belshazzar drank wine with his grandees, and perished in his revelry. The prodigal son, who for pleasure and independence had left his father’s house, sank into penury and*

*degradation, and he, a child of Abraham, fed swine to a heathen master.” [Eadie, 341]*

Just about everything in the Word of God, both positive and negative, is twisted by the world:

<i>adultery, fornication</i>	<i>making love</i>
<i>sexual lust, pornography</i>	<i>‘it doesn’t hurt to look’</i>
<i>murder of the innocent in the womb</i>	<i>a right, birth control</i>
<i>homosexuality, all sexual perversions</i>	<i>gays, alternate lifestyle</i>
<i>standing for truth, standing on the Word of God</i>	<i>bigotry, narrow-mindedness, old fashioned</i>
<i>blasphemy, vulgarity</i>	<i>free speech</i>
<i>greed, avarice, deceitful practices</i>	<i>good business, smart business</i>
<i>covetousness</i>	<i>getting what we deserve, a natural desire for more, motivated</i>
<i>personal responsibility</i>	<i>victimization, a product of our environment</i>
<i>drunkenness, drug abuse</i>	<i>a sickness</i>
<i>pride</i>	<i>self-confidence</i>
<i>selfishness</i>	<i>looking out for number one</i>

**v. 23 — and to be renewed — ἀνανεοῦσθαι δὲ [ananeousthai de]**  
— **‘TO BE RENEWED CONTINUALLY IN OUR THINKING’ — THIS IS AN ON-GOING PROCESS** — in stark contrast with the aorists ‘take off / put on’ is the present tense ‘be renewed,’ emphasizing the on-going process.

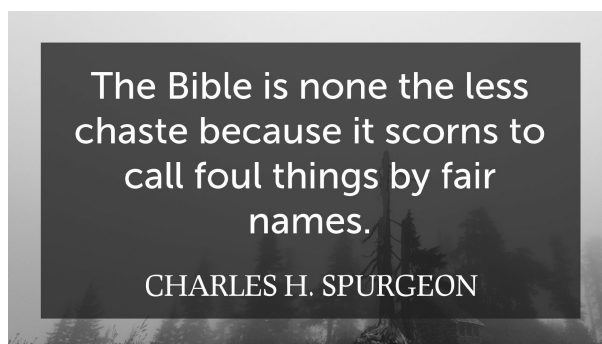
*“This injunction is not an exhortation to believers to repeat that event but to continue to live out its significance by giving up on that old person that they no longer are. They are new people who must become in practice what God has already made them, and that involves the resolve to put off the old way of life as it attempts to impinge.” [Lincoln, 285f; see also Salmond, 344; O’Brien, 329f; Hoehner, 607; Hodge, 189]*

*“The change from the aorist (v. 22) to the present may be to emphasise that renewal is not instantaneous but gradual. The change from the old person to the new must have a beginning and a conclusion, even if that conclusion lies beyond this life. It may be that the aorists of vv. 22, 24 represent what in God’s eyes has happened (the old person has been put off and the new put on) while v. 23 represents its realisation in practice.” [Best, 434f]*

*“This was Paul’s argument — you no longer belong to the old corruption of sin; you belong to the new creation in Christ. Take off the graveclothes! How do we do this? ‘Be renewed in the spirit of your mind’ (Eph. 4:23). Conversion is a crisis that leads to a process. Through Christ, once and for all, we have been given a new position in His new creation, but day by day, we must by faith appropriate what He has given us. The Word of God renews the mind as we surrender our all to Him (Rom. 12:1-2). ‘Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth’ (John 17:17). As the mind understands the truth of God’s Word, it is gradually transformed by the Spirit, and this renewal leads to a changed life. Physically, you are what you eat, but spiritually, you are what you think. ‘As he thinketh in his heart, so is he’ (Prov. 23:7). This is why it is important for us as Christians to spend time daily meditating on the Word, praying, and fellowshiping with Christ.” [Wiersbe, 40]*

*“Salvation relates to the mind, which is the center of thought, understanding, and belief, as well as of motive and action. The spirit of your mind is explained by one commentator as intending to show that it is not in the sphere of human thinking or human reason, but in the moral sphere, that this renewal occurs.... **When a person becomes a Christian, God initially renews his mind, giving it a completely new spiritual and moral capability — a capability that the most brilliant and educated mind apart from Christ can never achieve (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9-16). This renewal continues through the believer’s life as he is obedient to the Word and will of God (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). The process is not a one-time accomplishment but the continual work of the Spirit in the child of God (Titus 3:5). Our resources are God’s Word and prayer. It is through these means that we gain the mind of Christ (cf. Phil. 2:5; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:7), and it is through that mind that we live the life of Christ.**” [MacArthur, 177f]*

**ALL PEOPLE ARE IN A STATE OF EITHER CONTINUAL CORRUPTION OR CONTINUAL RENEWAL — “Like [being corrupted], the verb [be renewed] is in the present tense, referring to an ongoing process. The two processes of continual corruption and continual renewal, then, stand in contrast to each other: Paul’s readers are no longer on a self-destructive and ultimately ruinous path but are experiencing continual renewal (cf. Rom. 12:2).” [Thielman, 305] “The most important issue is the contrast these words provide. The present tense, which shows ongoing action, describes the**



*continual corruption of the old being (v. 22) and the continual renewing of the mind (v. 23). Both items are important. The old being is in a state of ever-deepening corruption, and the Christian life is an ever-increasing renewal of the mind (see 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16).” [Snodgrass, 235] “If heathen degradation is due to the futility of their minds, then Christian righteousness depends on the constant renewing of our minds.” [O’Brien, 331]*

**in the spirit of your mind,** — τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν [tō pneumati tou noos humōn] — ‘Spirit’ could be understood as either a reference to the Holy Spirit or to our human spirit. There are good men on both sides of this argument; those who believe this refers to the Holy Spirit understand Paul to be saying, ‘*be renewed by the Spirit in your mind*’ while those who believe this refers to our human spirit understand Paul to be saying, ‘*be renewed in the spirit of your mind.*’

#### Reasons for this to refer to the Holy Spirit:

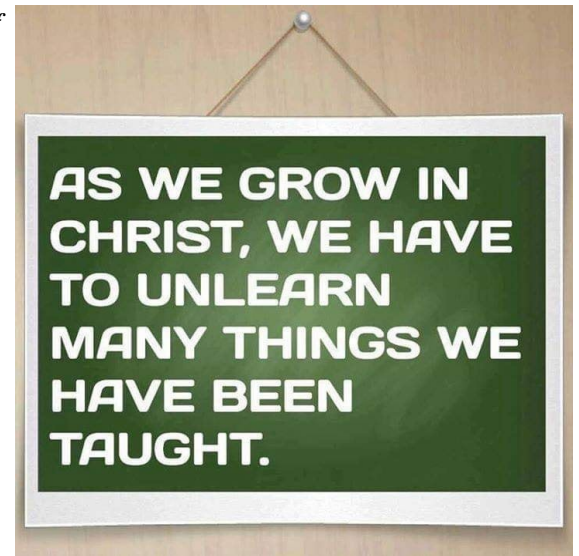
- Out of fourteen uses of the term (pneuma, spirit) in Ephesians, twelve clearly refer to the Spirit of God and one, just as clearly, refers to an evil spirit (2:2). In other words, in this letter the term tends to refer to a spiritual being, not to a faculty or aspect of human existence. In fact, the theme of the work of the Spirit is a major motif in this letter, occurring thirteen times.
- Some of the statements about the Spirit earlier in the letter point toward seeing the operation of the Spirit here. In the prayer of 1:17, Paul prays that the Spirit will bring to them wisdom and revelation in knowing Christ better (an activity of the mind). In the prayer of 3:16, he asks the Father to strengthen them with power through his Spirit in their inner selves (which would include the mind).
- The only other time this precise combination of the dative article with the ‘Spirit’ (to pneumati) occurs is in 1:13, where it clearly refers to the Holy Spirit (*‘you were sealed with the Holy Spirit’*).
- A power to bring about renewal is required and this would be the Holy Spirit (although this could be a divine passive and God be the one who renews). In Titus 3:5 the Holy Spirit is the explicit agent of renewal.
- Elsewhere in the letter it is the Spirit who controls believers (cf. 1:17; 3:16; 4:3; 5:18; 6:18).
- The larger context of v. 3 (with its reference to keeping the unity of the Spirit) and the more immediate context of v. 24 support this reference to the divine Spirit.

“It is therefore best to interpret this passage as referring to the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in a way similar to the functions Paul ascribes to the Spirit in Rom 8. The Spirit is the dynamic power of God working in the life of a believer, who can break the compelling tendency of believers to still think (and act) in accordance with the flesh (Rom 8:5 - 11, 13) and to order their lives according to the pattern of the old self.” [Arnold, 288f]

#### Reasons for this to refer to our human spirit:

- Paul speaks of the human spirit on many occasions (e.g., Rom 1:9; 8:16; 12:11; 1 Cor 5:3; 7:34; 14:15; 2 Cor 2:13; Col 2:5).
- Although nowhere else does Paul speak of the human spirit being renewed, conceivably he could do so.
- The strongest argument against this referring to the Holy Spirit is the grammar: the text states ‘*the spirit of your mind*’ not ‘*in your mind,*’ and it is hard to imagine how God’s Spirit can be described as belonging to ‘*your mind.*’ Had Paul intended to speak of the ‘*renewal of the mind by the Spirit*’ usage would normally require a different grammatical construction. The Spirit can be said to be the ‘*Spirit of Christ,*’ ‘*Spirit of God,*’ ‘*Spirit of holiness*’ or ‘*Spirit of adoption*’ but nowhere is the divine Spirit depicted as belonging to a human being or to part of a human being.
- It is true that the word ‘*pneuma*’ refers to the Holy Spirit the majority of times in the book of Ephesians but it is not sufficient to count instances and say that elsewhere in Ephesians or in the Pauline corpus one meaning appears more regularly than the other; a coin may be tossed six times and come down heads each time; the chance of it coming down heads on the seventh is still one in two, the same as at the beginning of the sequence; context must decide meaning, not the number of occurrences. [Best, 435]

*It is necessary, therefore, to take [pneuma] here as = our spirit, and that as at once distinguished from and related to the [‘mind’]. The [‘spirit’], then, appears to be the higher faculty in man, the faculty that makes him most akin to God, the organ of his spiritual life and his fellowship with God, under the bondage of sin by nature, but set free from that and made fit for the purposes of the Divine life by the Holy Spirit. The [‘mind’] is the faculty of understanding, feeling, and determining, distinguished by Paul from the [‘spirit’], represented as capable of approving the law, but incapable of withstanding the*

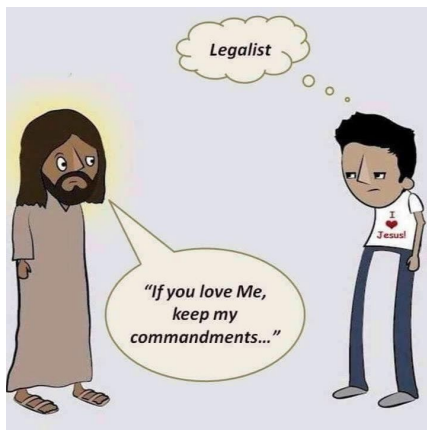




*motions of sin, and itself the subject or seat of renewal. Further the regenerate human spirit and the Divine Spirit are described as distinct and yet co-operant (Rom. viii. 16).... Thus the sense becomes 'renewed in respect of the spirit by which your mind is governed.'* [Salmond, 343]

“The renewal takes place not simply in the mind, but in the spirit of it. The dative points out the special seat of renewal. Matt. xi. 29; Acts vii. 51; 1 Cor. xiv. 20. The mind remains as before, both in its intellectual and emotional structure — in its memory and judgment, imagination and perception. These powers do not in themselves need renewal, and regeneration brings no new faculties. The organism of the mind survives as it was, but the spirit, its highest part, the possession of which distinguishes man from the inferior animals, and fits him for receiving the Spirit of God, is being renovated. The memory, for example, still exercises its former functions, but on a very different class of subjects; the judgment still discharging its old office, is occupied among a new set of themes and ideas; and love, retaining all its ardour, attaches itself to objects quite in contrast with those of its earlier preference and pursuit. The change is not in mind psychologically, either in its essence or in its operation; neither is it in mind, as if it were a superficial change of opinion, either on points of doctrine or of practice; but it is ‘in the spirit of the mind,’ in that which gives mind both its bent and its materials of thought. It is not simply in the spirit, as if it lay there in dim and mystic quietude; but it is ‘in the spirit of the mind,’ in the power which, when changed itself, radically alters the entire sphere and business of the inner mechanism.” [Eadie, 341ff]

**WHILE PAUL PROBABLY SPOKE OF OUR HUMAN SPIRIT, ‘GOD’S SPIRIT IS HOVERING NEARBY’** — While it makes the most sense that Paul was making a reference to our human spirit here, this is not to deny the work of the Holy Spirit in this whole matter. *“Having said all this, it is still appropriate to see God’s Spirit ‘hovering nearby,’ as Fee memorably puts it. Paul speaks of ‘being renewed,’ in the passive voice, and the agent of the passive action is clearly God. God works ‘through his Spirit in the inner human being’ (3:16), and so the inward renewal that Paul describes here is something that the Spirit accomplishes in believers.”* [Thielman, 306] “The sphere of this renewing work, then, is the person’s inmost being (cf. ‘the inner person’ of 3:16), and the implication is that ‘the pattern, motivation and direction of our thinking needs to be changed’. Theologically, this inward renewal is the work of the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5), progressively transforming believers into the image of Christ ‘from one degree of glory to another’ (2 Cor. 3:18). It is by the Spirit’s power that the inner being is renewed every day (4:16).” [O’Brien, 330]



**THIS ARGUES AGAINST LEGALISM** — To some, anytime someone says ‘the Christian should live like this ...’ or ‘the Christian should not do this ...’, their first response is ‘Legalism!!’ That is an incorrect view of legalism. ***Of course there are things a Christian should or should not do; just consider Paul’s comments from 4:25–5:2!*** True legalism relates not to the ‘do’s and don’ts’ themselves but why we do these things. If we are obeying just out of external pressure then yes, that is legalism. But this is exactly what Paul is teaching against here: the change is to come from inside of us, not something external. ***“If the old ways are to be abandoned, renewal is called for, and this must be an inward renewal. The new life is not to be regulated by conformity to some external standard; its wellspring lies within, ‘in the spirit of your mind.’ So Paul exhorts the Roman Christians: ‘Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind’ (Rom. 12:2). This inward renewal is the work of the Holy Spirit, progressively transforming believers into the image of Christ, ‘from one degree of glory to another’ (2 Cor. 3:18). It is by the Spirit’s power, too, that ‘the inner being is being renewed every day,’ no matter to what attrition the body may be exposed (2***

***Cor. 4:16), until what is mortal is ‘swallowed up by life’ — a consummation of which the Spirit is the present guarantee (2 Cor. 5:4-5).”*** [Bruce, 358]

**v. 24 — and to put on the new man, (YLT)** — καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον [humōn kai endusasthai ton kainon anthrōpon] — the ‘new man, new self’ was discussed along with the ‘old self’; see above.

**which, according to God, was created in righteousness and kindness of the truth. (YLT)** — τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας [ton kata theon ktisthenta en dikaiosunē kai hosiotēti tēs alētheias] — **‘CREATED’ IS PASSIVE** — *“The new self is not simply a renewal of the old self; it is a new creation. The passive participle ‘created’ should probably be taken as a divine passive; that is, God is the creative force behind it. The same God who created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1) is now responsible for the creation of this new identity of believers. He is creating a people for himself who will conform to his own image or likeness. This corresponds to the thought of Col 3:10, where the new self is shaped in the likeness of the image of Creator God. This corresponds with Paul’s thought in 2 Cor 5:17, that ‘if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.’ In that context, Paul clarifies that ‘the Spirit gives life’ (2 Cor 3:6).”* [Arnold, 290f] *“The renewal of their minds from the corruption and despair characteristic of the worldview of those in rebellion against God is part of God’s re-creative work of restoring the universe to its original harmony with himself and, internally, with itself.”*

[Thielman, 306; see also Salmond, 344; Best, 436f; Lincoln, 270; Snodgrass, 235f; Eadie, 344] *“God is not only the author of this mighty work; he is also the pattern or model of the new creation. It is made ‘in his likeness’ (lit. ‘in accordance with God’), that is, created ‘like him’. It is not surprising, therefore, that the qualities of righteousness and holiness which characterize the new person are predicated of God in both Old and New Testaments.”* [O’Brien, 332] “As Christians, we

have not simply changed our minds. We have totally changed our citizenship. We belong to God's 'new creation' in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), and therefore, the ideas and desires of the old creation no longer should control our lives. [Wiersbe, 40]

**in righteousness and holiness, kindness** — ἐν δικαιοσύνη καὶ ὁσιότητι [en dikaiosunē kai hosiotēti] — The paired expression serves as a comprehensive phrase for virtuous living and thus explains what it means to be like God. “[T]he new humanity displays these qualities that belong to God, because it has been recreated to be like God.” [Lincoln, 288] “The knowledge of God is never divorced from walking in his ways: to know him is to be like him, righteous as he is righteous, holy as he is holy.” [Bruce, 359] This coincides with Paul's comments in 2:10 that believers are 'created for good works which God prepared beforehand.' Some make a distinction of 'holiness towards God' and 'righteousness towards people.' Some also suggest these two words exemplify the two tables of the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) but neither of these distinctions are consistently maintained throughout Scripture. [Best, 437f; O'Brien, 332f; Arnold, 290; Eadie, 344ff; Thielman, 306f; Snodgrass, 236; MacArthur, 178f]

**in righteousness** — ἐν δικαιοσύνη [en dikaiosunē] — a common word defined as 'righteousness, uprightness, just.' This word is used as an attribute of God (Ps 35:24; Isa 5:16; 33:5; Rom 3:5) and, as such, is coextensive with the fact that he is 'holy.' God's call to his people to 'be holy, because I am holy' (Lev 11:44 - 45; 19:2) encompasses a summons to be righteous. Paul will appeal to his readers to cultivate righteousness later in this letter (5:9; 6:14). “In the LXX it occurs 345 times and in the canonical books it appears 263 times and translates eleven Hebrew words.... References allude to God's attribute of righteousness (Deut 33:21; 1 Kgs 8:32; 2 Chr 6:23; Hos 2:19 [MT & LXX 2:21]; Zech 8:8), God's dealing in righteousness (Ps 9:4,8; Isa 5:16; 33:5; 58:2), and also to a person's own righteousness (Deut 9:4-6; 1 Kgs 3:6) or acting righteously (Lev 19:15; 1 Sam 26:23; 2 Sam 8:15; Isa 56:1). In the NT [righteousness] occurs ninety-two times, fifty-eight times in Paul, and three times in Ephesians (4:24; 5:9; 6:14). It can refer to God's attribute of righteousness (Rom 3:25-26) or to a person who has a right standing before God (Rom 3:21-22; 4:3, 5). It can refer to a person's own righteousness (Matt 5:20; Rom 10:3) or to his or her dealings that are to be righteous (Rom 6:13; Phil 1:11). In the present context it refers to righteous actions of the new person, a quality of life (cf. Eph 5:9).” [Hoehner, 611f]

**and holiness, kindness** — καὶ ὁσιότητι [kai hosiotēti] — Almost all the popular versions translates this word as 'holiness' (Tyndale, Geneva, KJV, RV, ASV, RSV, NKJV, NASV, NIV, ESV) but one of which I am using in these studies translates the word as 'kindness' (YLT). The reason for that may be because the word used here is not our common word for 'holy, sanctify, saints' (ἅγιον [hagion] or some form of the word) as in Eph 4:30. The word Paul uses here is ὁσιότητι [hosiotēti] and is defined by the lexicons as follows: 'state of proper attitude toward God as exhibited in action, devoutness, piety, holiness' [BDAG]; 'a disposition that acts out of regard for the moral law of God: dedication, holiness' [Friberg]; 'piety, holiness' [Liddel-Scott]. “[This word] has the idea of a disposition of piety towards the gods or parents. It appears nine times in the LXX, six times referring to personal piety before God (Deut 9:5; 1 Sam 14:41; 1 Kgs 9:4; Prov 14:32; Wis 2:22; 5:19), three times to God's holiness (Ode 9:75; Wis 9:3; 14:30), and once to the divine law (Wis 18:9). It appears twice in the NT: in the present context and in Luke 1:75 with reference to Zechariah's prophecy where both this word and righteousness (the reverse order from Paul) are used to denote service to God with an attitude of personal piety and righteousness. **Basically, it means to have personal piety, devotedness, or reverence before God.**” [Hoehner, 612]

**of the truth** — τῆς ἀληθείας [tēs alētheias] — Just as the evil desires of our old self found its origin in 'deceit' (4:22), Paul says the righteous and pious characteristic of the 'new self' originates in the truth of God as described in the gospel (1:13; 4:15) and as seen in Jesus whom the gospel proclaims (4:21). By embracing the gospel, believers are connected to the source of truth. [Thielman, 306f; Arnold, 290]

**MAN AS MAN SHOULD HAVE BEEN** — “This passage is of special doctrinal importance, as teaching us the true nature of the image of God in which man was originally created. That image did not consist merely in man's rational nature, nor in his immortality, nor in his dominion, but specially in that righteousness and holiness, that rectitude in all his principles, and that susceptibility of devout affections, which are inseparable from the possession of the truth, or true knowledge of God. This is the scriptural view of the original state of man, or of original righteousness, as opposed, on the one hand, to the Pelagian theory that man was created without moral character; and on the other, to the Romish doctrine, that original righteousness was a supernatural endowment not belonging to man's nature. Knowledge, and consequently righteousness and holiness, were immanent or concreated in the first man, in the same sense as were his sense of beauty and susceptibility of impression from the external world. He eyes and saw what was visible, and perceived its beauty; he turned his mind on God, perceived his glory, and was filled with all holy affections.” [Hodge, 193f] “What Adam lost in the fall, has been regained by Christ, a new creation in the likeness of God's image. It is interesting to notice that the word 'creation' is not used in connection with the 'old person.' God originally created human beings without sin and when they fell they lost that original state. This new person has been newly created after God's image.” [Hoehner, 610f]