

Ephesians
July 20, 2008
Ephesians 4:17-28

I. Before and After

Picture your life before you were a Christian. Picture it now.

Is it different? Do you have less problems? (Not a Biblical promise to the Christian...the Biblical promise is that you would have more.) Do you act differently? Would there be enough evidence in your life to convict you of being a Christian in a court of law?

Paul writes:

Rom 8:37

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

NIV

Do you feel that you are more than a conqueror? In all things? If you do not feel this way, what would it take for you to feel like one? Even more like one?

II. Changed Lives

Eph 4:17-19

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

NIV

Verse 17 People should be able to see differences between Christians and non-Christians. As was discussed in the 1 Peter class, statistically within the US, this is not the case for the most part. Why?

Verse 17 The non-believing Gentile apparently believed in the “futility of their thinking.” If Christians are not statistically different from non-Christians, what does that say about the thinking of many Christians? What can we do about it? Romans 1:18-32 graphically describes the futility of non-Christian thinking.

Verse 18 In 4:13-16, Paul described mature Christians. In 4:17-19, he describes people who are non-believers, commanding Christians not to be like them.

Verse 18 Earlier in Romans, Paul tells us that God has given them over to their depraved thoughts. However, that does not mean that they

never had any knowledge, and it does not mean that they will be excused from punishment for their transgressions.

Rom 2:15-16

15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) 16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

NIV

III. Gave Gifts to Men

Eph 4:20-24

20 You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. 21 Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 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; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

NIV

Verse 22 “Old self” is literally old nature or old man.

2 Peter 1:3-4

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

NIV

Verse 22 Since Christians are still housed in sinful flesh, they might also lapse into poor behavior. Paul’s point is that they need to not to follow the evil desires of sinful flesh, but rather to follow God.

Verse 23 A great verse on the transformation of the mind is:

Rom 12:2

2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

NIV

Verse 24 The transformed mind is part of the “new self” leaving behind the old self:

2 Peter 1:5-7

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

2 Cor 4:16-18

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

NIV

Verse 24 What does it mean to have “true righteousness and holiness”?

2 Cor 5:21

21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

NIV

IV. Works of Dis-Service

Eph 4:25-28

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

NIV

Verse 25

Paul is still writing about unity, and obviously lying disrupts unity. Just as obvious, it also affects the person.

Questions:

- Why does lying disrupt unity?
- What are some reasons why a person would lie?
- What happens when one is caught in a lie?
- What does one gain by lying? With people? With God?
- If you could give one bit of advice concerning lying, what would it be?

Verses 26-27

This verse alludes to:

Ps 4:4

4 In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.

NIV

If we dwell on our anger, we can give the devil a foothold. Clearly we do not have our eyes on Jesus if this is the case, which is how we can prevent giving the devil a foothold. We keep our eyes on Jesus if we submit ourselves to God and our anger becomes less important:

James 4:7-8

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

NIV

The point is not to dwell on your anger per this verse. Even God gets angry, but He is also slow to anger, as we are told to be, and anger can lead to other negatives:

James 1:19-20

19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.
Matt 5:21-22

21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

NIV

Questions:

How is it possible to be angry and not sin?

What happens to our unity with others if we become angry?

What happens to us if we become angry?

How do you deal with anger when you are inevitably attacked by it?

How can we delay the onset of anger?

What does one gain by becoming angry? With people? With God?

If you could give one bit of advice concerning becoming angry, what would it be?

Verse 28

Stealing is an obvious example of behavior that should change when someone becomes a Christian. Changed lives are the best possible advertisement for being a Christian.

Rather than taking from those what belongs to them, we are to give to others what belongs to us.

1 Thess 4:11

11 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you,

1 Cor 4:12

12 We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it;

NIV

Questions:

Why would someone steal?

If Christians steal, what does that say about them?

What happens if one is caught stealing?

What does one gain by stealing? With people? With God?

How does stealing within a community affect the community?

If you could give one bit of advice concerning stealing, what would it be?