

"But Ye Did Not So Learn Christ ..."

"Who being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye did not so learn Christ; if so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as the 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, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. 4:17-24).

The apostle's statement, *"But ye did not so learn Christ,"* is predicated upon his description of those who *"walk as the Gentiles also walk;"* those who walk in the vanity of their minds ... are darkened in their understanding because of the ignorance which is in them through the hardening of their hearts. Such ones were past feeling and their whole life was given over to shameless, loose behavior. They rejoiced in both unclean things and the gratification of them. No Christian can give himself up to such things all the while insisting that he learned such practices from Christ. No, says the apostle, *"Ye did not so learn Christ."*

"If so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him." The apostle makes a contrast. There are some things you did not learn from Christ; for, if you really learned Christ you know the aforementioned things which describe the walk of Gentiles, were to be put away as part of the old man you laid aside. This is the real truth in Jesus.

There follows a general appeal of things which must be put off and put on. He does not yet specify those things for he reserves the cataloguing of them until later; but generally he speaks of those things to be laid aside, and on the other hand, to be put on. Thus he says, *"That ye put away the old man."* This expression *"the old man"* is used exclusively by Paul. The parallel passage from Colossians reads, *"lie one not to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his doings" (3:9).* It appears in Romans 6:8: *"knowing this that our old man was crucified with him that the body of sin might be done away, that we should no longer be in bondage to sin" (cf. Rom. 6:6).* Paul told the Ephesians that the old man *"was corrupt after the lusts of deceit;"* the innocency of men was corrupted (lost) through the avenue of the lust of deceit. Those who truly learn Christ and put off the old man are to put on the new man who holds God as his model and seeks to fashion himself in God's character of righteousness and holiness of truth. Some has said that *"men hate a vacuum;"* they rush to fill it. Jesus warned of the consequence of laying aside the old man but failing to put on the new man (Lk. 11:24-26).

What is the motivation which brings us to put on the "new man"? The apostle informed us, "*That ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind.*" Here "mind" stands for attitude. In the Roman letter Paul wrote of the "*mind of the flesh*" and the "*mind of the Spirit*" (Rom. 8:6). In the Roman passage the "Spirit" is the Holy Spirit through the word which brought about the proper attitude in one's heart. In the Ephesian passage "*spirit*" stands for our heart and the attitude present within it. The heart must be renewed, refreshed. Paul told Corinthians that their "*inward man was renewed day by day*" but his meaning there is not the thought here in Ephesians. However, the sense here is seen in the companion passage from Colossians: "*And have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him*" (Col. 3:10). The thought is also seen in Romans 12:2: "*And be not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" "Conform" -- "transformed." The "old man" is he who is "conformed" (fashioned) according to this world; the transformed man is the new man who has become so because his mind has been renewed. Paul told Titus this "*renewal*" is the Spirit's work who reveals truth. Who one truly learns Christ, the old man is laid aside and the new man is put on. One who thus acts is one who "*has learned Christ.*"

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