

In verses 17 to 19 of Ephesians 4, Paul lists the characteristics of those who are not saved—those who are not born again—those who are not children of God and then gives the reason “real” Christians don’t act this way in verses 20 and 21:

“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...”

Paul writes, *“But you did not learn Christ in this way...”* This verse is in the *aorist* tense in the Greek language which points to specific time; it is a snapshot of an event in time. The Apostle Paul was saying that at a specific moment of time they came to *know* Jesus in salvation.

Paul wasn't referring to knowing the doctrines of Christ but the person of Christ Himself. It wasn't that they learned *about* Jesus. They came to know Jesus in a personal way.

In verse 21 Paul writes, *“But you did not learn Christ in this way...”* The word “learn” implies more than receiving instruction, though that is included. It is to learn Christ in such a way as to become a disciple or a follower of Christ.

What Paul is doing here is showing that in contrast to the insensitive, passion-dominated pagans who exist only to satisfy their lower nature, true believers have had a personal encounter with the living Christ that radically changes things about the person.

There are several things that we can observe from Paul's comments in verse 20 and 21.

1. *Perhaps some of his readers are walking like the unbelievers because they were unbelievers. They walked in the vanity of their mind and were spiritually blind because they did not know God.*

In the group of people that profess to know Christ, one is going to find both believers and unbelievers. There are going to be people who say that they know Christ but not everyone knows Jesus.

Paul may have written Ephesians 4:20-21 because some of his readers were walking like unbelievers because they were unbelievers.

2. *Some of his readers may have learned about a Christ different from the biblical Jesus*

In 2 John 1:7, the Apostle John writes, *“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”*

Paul writes in 2 Tim 4:3-4, *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”*

There are many who are going around teaching about a different Christ than the Bible teaches. They are teaching about:

- A Christ that is nothing more than a genie.

- A Christ that is all love and no judgment.
- A Christ that is all freedom and no accountability.
- A Christ that winks at sin and never disciplines.

Some of Paul's readers were walking like unbelievers because they were following a Christ different from the biblical Jesus.

Thirdly, Paul may have written Ephesians 4:20-21 because:

3. *Some of his readers were Christians who haven't been properly taught.*

In verse 22 Paul tells us that there are three things that each one of us who claims the name of Christ should have been taught upon becoming a Christian:

1.) *We have put off the old man. (vs. 22)*

The "old man" refers to the unsaved person dominated by the totally depraved nature. (Wuest)

The words, "put off" is a figure that bares the image of the putting of off garments..

Paul is saying that if when you and I trusted Christ, we should have been taught that we put off the old man—that is, he has been stripped off of us like a worn out and useless garment. The old man is no more to the Christian.

Paul writes that our "old man was crucified with Christ" in a once-for-all crucifixion that was accomplished at the Cross.

2.) *We should be continually being renewed in the spirit of our minds (vs. 23)*

Whereas the "putting off of the old" man was a once-for-all act, the being renewed "in the spirit of our minds" is a continuing process.

The word "renewed" in Ephesians 4:23 is the Greek word (**ananeoo**) that means "to be renovated by inward reformation."

Several years ago there was a program in Baltimore City where you could purchase a row house for a dollar. If you bought one, you had to agree to gut all the insides and renovate it completely. Once the work was done, the "Dollar Home" was worth several times the investment.

In verse 23, Paul is saying that as Christians, we have the ongoing responsibility of being renovated in the spirit of our minds. The problem with many Christians is that they look "changed" on the outside but on the inside they still have the rotten, termite infested wood and rusty old pipes."

- Their perspective on life is still the same.
- They still look for fulfillment in the world, not in Jesus Christ.
- Their priorities haven't changed since they've become a Christian.
- They dress like a Christian, and they talk like a Christian, but it's all a front because on the inside they have the same old stuff and need to be renovated.

Paul writes that each one of us who claims the name of Christ should have been taught that:

(1) We have put off the old man, (2) We should be continually being renewed in the spirit of our minds and thirdly,

3.) *We have put on the new man (vs. 24).*

(Eph 4:24 NKJV) and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Like the putting off of the old man was a once-for-all action which occurred in the past, the putting on of the “new man” was a once-for-all act. Paul is saying that you should have been taught that when becoming a Christian you put on the new man.

We saw that “old” meant old in the sense of outworn, decrepit and useless, new refers not to new in time but *new in quality*.

Since the old man refers to the unsaved person dominated by the totally depraved nature, the new man refers to the saved person dominated by the divine nature.

If you trusted Christ as Lord and Savior, you put on the new man which is created according to God. Something took place—though you may not have felt it, it becomes evident in the way you begin to conduct yourself.

- Your perspective on life changes.
- You look for fulfillment in Jesus Christ not in the world
- Your priorities change and what is important to God is now important to you.

There are consequences to the new birth in Christ. Paul essentially says in Ephesians 4:24, *“If you have put on the new man than here is what you need to start doing.”*

Put off Lying

(Eph 4:25 NKJV) Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

A deacon sent in his apologies for the Sunday morning service, claiming that he was ill with flu. One of the members, however, said he had seen the deacon on his way to a ball game.

After the service, the minister went to visit the deacon, "Brother," he said, "I have information that you were not sick at all this morning, but went to watch a ball game."

The deacon protested: "That's a vicious lie! And I'll show you my FISH to prove it!"

A minister wound up the services one morning by saying, "Next Sunday I am going to preach on the subject of LIARS. And in this connection, I would like you all to read the 17th chapter of Mark."

The next Sunday, the preacher rose to begin, and said, "Now, all of you who have done as I requested and read the 17th chapter of Mark, please raise your hands."

Nearly every hand in the congregation went up. "Very good," said the preacher. "You are precisely the people I wish to speak to this morning. There is no 17th chapter of Mark!"

As funny as these illustrations are, lying is a serious matter to the Lord.

Proverbs 6:16, says that there are *"six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him."* The second item in that list, sandwiched between *"A proud look,"* and *"Hands that shed innocent blood,"* is *"A lying tongue."*

Jesus, when speaking to the hypocritical Pharisees called them children of the devil because they were liars like him.

(John 8:44 NKJV) "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

One way you can tell whether a person is an unbeliever is if he or she is a chronic liar. In revelation 21, Jesus places liars in the list of those who will burn in the Lake of Fire:

(Rev 21:8 NKJV) "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

So Paul writes to the Christian, *"Put away lying."* Obviously some were lying.

Perhaps it was a situation like that in Acts chapter 5 where Ananias and Sapphira, lied to the church, lied to the Apostles and lied to the Holy Spirit about the amount of money they received from the sale of their property.

They wanted to be "big shots" in the church and sold the land for a higher amount than they led the church to believe they sold it for and pocketed the difference. This lying cost them their lives.

Paul writes, *"Put away lying. "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another."* Paul is setting forth a principal that he will use for the next several exhortations and here it is:

When you and I got saved, the Bible says in Ephesians 4:22 that we have *"put off the old man."* And in verse 24, it says that we have *"put on the new man."*

The principal is that when God tells us to put off something, He doesn't leave us "spiritually naked" but tells us to put on something. He doesn't leave us naked.

When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden before their fall into sin, they did not realize that they were naked because they were clothed with innocence. However, as soon as they sinned, they realized that they were naked and were ashamed and hid themselves behind fig leaves.

God in His mercy performed the first sacrifice and took the skins of animals and put those skins on the couple. God doesn't leave us naked.

When God tells us to “*put away lying,*” He balances that command of “put off” with the command to “put on.” At the end of verse 25, Paul writes, “*speak truth...*” So in essence, we are to put off lying and put on speaking the truth.

Telling the truth is characteristic of those who are followers of Jesus Christ.

(1 John 1:6 NKJV) If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

(1 John 2:4 NKJV) He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

(1 John 2:5 NKJV) But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

(1 John 2:21 NKJV) I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

(1 John 2:22 NKJV) Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

(1 John 3:18 NKJV) My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

Lying should be replaced with telling the truth. Paul gives his readers a reason for this command and it is “*we are members of one another.*”

What if your brain lied to your hand that was touching a hot stove? “*Oh everything is alright; there is no need for alarm.*” Your hand would get barbecued.

What if your eyes told a lie to your legs as you were crossing a street?

When Paul uses the word, “neighbor” he is referring to a brother or sister in Christ. This is why he follows with, “*for we are members of one another.*”

When you lie to your brother or sister in the Body of Christ, you will only end up hurting yourself. So put off lying and put on telling the truth.

Be Angry but Don't Sin

Paul goes on in Ephesians chapter 4 and writes in verses 26-27:

"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil."

Imbedded in this command is a negative and a positive.

The negative is, “Put off *sinful* anger” or “Put off anger that leads to sin.”

The positive is, “Put on a righteous indignation.”

The command is “*Be angry.*” However, taken out of context and you have an excuse to get enraged or infuriated when things don't go your way. But the Christian life isn't all about you, it is about Christ.

"In this world you will have tribulation," Jesus said, but "be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

People are going to rub you the wrong way. People are going to sin against you. *"Be angry"* Paul writes, but don't sin.

One good example where people are disregarding this passage of Scripture is with respect to the abortion situation in our land.

When it comes to abortion, Christians ought to get angry. Christians ought to get angry because of the abortion process where the child is pulled, feet-first, through the birth canal.

Right before the head of the infant is delivered, it is stabbed in the skull and its brains are suctioned out. The skull is then crushed, and the dead baby delivered. Are you angry? You ought to be.

Sadly, many have gotten angry about this sin that plagues our land but some have allowed their anger to break loose into sin. It is one thing to get angry at the abortionists but when you allow your anger to turn to *hate*, the Bible says you become a murderer. (1 John 3:15)

Paul writes, *"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil."*

"Don't give place to the devil" means don't give the devil a foothold or an opportunity in your life.

There are three words for "anger" in the Greek New Testament.

Thumos speaks of a turbulent commotion, the boiling agitation of the feelings, passion, anger forthwith boiling up and soon subsiding. This kind of anger is forbidden in Ephesians 4:31 as we shall soon see.

Parorgismos, translated "wrath" at the end of verse 26, is also forbidden. It refers to anger that is accompanied by irritation, exasperation and embitterment.

Orgē is an anger which is an abiding and settled habit of the mind that is aroused under certain conditions. This is the word used in *"Be angry"* at the beginning of verse 26. Here this word speaks of a *righteous indignation*.

An example of this kind of anger is found in Mark 3:

(Mark 3:1 NKJV) And He (Jesus) entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand.

(Mark 3:2 NKJV) So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.

(Mark 3:3 NKJV) And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward."

(Mark 3:4 NKJV) Then He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent.

*(Mark 3:5 NKJV) And when He had looked around at them with **anger**, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.*

It is ok to be angry in a righteous way. It is ok to get angry at evil and express the anger in a way that will bring glory to God. But it is not ok to allow the kind of anger which is characterized by irritation fester.

This is why Paul writes, *"Don't let the sun go down on your wrath nor give place to the devil."* Here Paul is forbidding the continuation of an action already going on. Paul is literally saying, "Stop giving the devil an opportunity for acting."

You see, anger opens the door for Satan to come into your circumstances and have his way. Paul is saying stop allowing him to do this.

When your anger against your spouse causes you to sin, it gives Satan a foothold. When your anger against your employer, the government or a neighbor causes you to sin, it gives the enemy a foothold.

When Sinbad and his sailors landed on one of their tropical islands, they saw high up in the trees coconuts which could quench their thirst and satisfy their hunger. The coconuts were far above the reach of Sinbad and the sailors, but in the branches of the trees were the chattering of apes.

Sinbad and his men began to throw stones and sticks up at the apes. This enraged the monkeys and they began to seize the coconuts and hurl them down at the men on the ground. That was just what Sinbad and his men wanted. They got the apes angry so that the apes would gather their food for them.

This is a good illustration of how by our anger we play into the hands of our enemy Satan and is why Paul commands the Christian to deal with your anger quickly—that is, do not let the sun go down on your wrath.

Don't let a day of anger go by without dealing with it or you will allow the devil an opportunity to exploit your anger and cause you bring dishonor to God.

Have you ever said something out of anger and wished that you had the opportunity to take back your words? We all know that once you spewed out those vitreous words you cannot get them back—but oftentimes they will come back to haunt you.

Paul continues laying out the behavior that should be exhibited in the life of the Christian who has put off the old man and put on the new man.

Do Not Steal But Give

(Eph 4:28 NKJV) Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

Remember the principal here; it is put off, put on. Paul is essentially saying, "Put off stealing, put on giving."

Paul was writing to a group of people living in a culture that didn't altogether condemn stealing. It was almost anticipated that a person would be given to stealing especially if he was unemployed. This was the kind of culture that the early church was a part of.

We have a similar mindset in our culture today when it comes to stealing. Just go to a supermarket that has the bins full of candy and other snacks. The sign says, "Serve Yourself" and that's just what people do! How many of us have "sampled" the grapes?

How many of us have been guilty of stealing from our jobs? How many times does a 15-minute break become a 20-minute break?

Why don't we take a few minutes to go through our personal effects and find that pen or pencil that belongs to the company we work for—the one that should have left at the job—we need to lay those things at the altar.

How about those that are using their neighbor's cable TV or electricity or using city water without paying for it?

There are those who profess to know Christ but don't want to pay their bills. The bill collectors call and they say they are going to send the check tomorrow but don't ever get around to it.

How many times have you stolen money from the government when you did your taxes? Did you really give that much to charity? Jesus said in Mark 12:17, *“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.”*

It is nothing for people to steal from the church. There used to be a time when the church doors were literally always open—once upon a time, churches didn't lock their doors.

We are talking about the stealing that takes place by those who profess to be Christians.

Another way professing Christians steal is by having sex before they get married.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 Paul writes, *“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud/cheat/steal from his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.”*

Let's look at one more way that Christians steal. Christians steal when they don't give God the first-fruits of their income. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 16:2, *“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper...”*

When you fail to do this, God says in Malachi 3:8 that you “rob” Him.

Paul says: *“Let him who stole steal no longer...”* Remember the principal taught by Paul: When he tells his readers to “put off” a sinful habit or behavior, he usually follows it with something to “put on.”

In Ephesians 4:22, the Bible says, *“Put off, your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts”* and (vs. 23) put on a “renewed mind” and (vs. 24) and *“the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”*

In Ephesians 4:25 Paul says, *“Put away lying,”* and then he follows that exhortation with, *“Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another.”*

In Ephesians 4:26 Paul tells you what to “put on” first—it’s righteous indignation. He says, “*Be angry*” and then he tells us what to “put off”—it’s sin, wrath and an opportunity for the devil to take advantage of us.

In verse 28 Paul says “put off stealing... *Let him who stole steal no longer.*” And again, he doesn’t leave the thief spiritually naked for he continues, telling him to “*labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.*”

When a thief is caught he usually is punished for his crime. However there have been times when the justice system has required that criminals make *restitution* to their victims.

Restitution is giving compensation or paying a victim for his or her losses. If a thief steals a TV and is caught, he may not only have to go to jail but to make restitution to the victim; in other words, the thief has to pay the victim for his or her losses.

An example of this is found in Scripture. In Luke chapter we find a man named, Zacchaeus. He is a Jew that was hire by the Roman government to collect taxes from his own people. What made it worse was that Rome allowed him to collect more taxes than what his countrymen owed and pocket the difference.

Zacchaeus began to follow Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior and as a result, Jesus changed his life. We can tell this change was “for real” by something this tax collector did.

Luke 19:8 tells us that at a dinner where Jesus was present, “*Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”* (Luke 19:8)

Remember, when Jesus saves you, “*all things become new.*” When Jesus comes into your life, you get a new desire to live righteously and now you want to make things right with people you’ve offended before becoming a Christian.

I first heard this teaching as my pastor shared the story of a man that had become successful in the corporate world. Sometime after this, the man had become a Christian and was convicted in his spirit that he had received his college degree as a result of cheating.

The man went back to the university and confessed his sin to the board. The college stripped him of his degree but gave him the opportunity to earn it back again by passing the course that he had cheated on.

Well, after hearing this story the Lord brought to my heart the folk that I had hurt and offended. I began to recall some of the people that I had sinned against. I knew that I had to make restitution—which in some cases meant giving something back that I had stolen or asking forgiveness for a sin that I committed.

I began to remember the women that I had sinned against before I got married and I knew that while it would not be appropriate for me to seek them out; I could pray that God would allow me the opportunity to seek their forgiveness *in His timing.*

I remembered that I had sinned against my own wife by not being patient enough to wait until we were married to be intimate.

The Holy Spirit took me back to the seventh grade when I had joined a club that required its members to steal comic books from a store in my neighborhood. I passed the test, but one of the other members of the club became jealous of my “skills” and warned the store manager to look out for me. The manager then banished me from his store. I never returned until I graduated from high school and only then because I had heard that the store manager had died.

After the Lord brought this to my mind, I knew that I had to make restitution. About 20 years ago I knew I needed to go to this store and make restitution. The store in the neighborhood I grew up in had long closed so I had to drive to the one in another area.

When I arrived, I told my story to the store manager and shared what God had done in my heart since becoming a Christian. I offered to pay Ben Franklin for the things I had stolen and I was surprised to hear the manager say to me, “I was forgiven!”

There was another occasion when I was around 18 years old I went to the drive thru of a bank to cash a check. I put my check and ID in the plastic tube and launched it. It came back with my money. I returned the tube to the machine and counted my money. The tube came back again with more money—the bank teller had cashed my check twice! I drove away with the loot.

This event came to my mind as my pastor taught from Ephesians chapter 4 about restitution. I was introduced to Proverbs 6 where it says, *“People do not despise a thief If he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold; He may have to give up all the substance of his house.”*

With fear and trembling, not knowing what they would do, I eventually went to a branch of the bank that I had stolen from and told them my story. I was prepared to repay them what I had taken but the Bank Manager said their computer system had no way to receive and record funds that were returned in such a way.

A clear conscience...

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:12, *“For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.”*

Paul says that when he conducted himself, he did so in a way that resulted in him having a clear conscience.

Is your conscience clear or does it (like mine did) accuse you of things that need to be addressed? Does your conscience say you need to be reconciled with someone you’ve hurt or offended? Do you owe anybody anything? The Scriptures say, *“Owe nothing to anyone except to love...”*

There are words to a song that says, *“Nothing between my soul and my Savior.”* Are there issues that need to be addressed in your life so they will no longer hinder your walk with and worship of the Lord?

Paul’s command in Ephesians 4:28 was more than a statement regarding restitution. It was a principal that reflected the change that Jesus can make in one’s heart.

Paul’s statement wasn’t a cold, coarse edict that was to be followed by the church. He wasn’t laying down a law that thieves should pay their victims back. Paul’s statement was a declaration of what the

power of the Holy Spirit can do in changing a common street thief into one who is on a mission from the Lord to give.

Jesus specializes in changing people. Jesus specializes in making the old new; the sad, happy; the blind, see; the hateful, loving; the thief, a giving person. Jesus specializes in changing people!

Jesus changed Paul from a Christ-rejecting, Christian-murdering Pharisee who went around persecuting the church of God—to a Christ-loving apostle who spent himself planting churches, spreading the Gospel and teaching believers concerning the glory of Christ. Jesus specializes in changing people!

Paul writes, *“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”*

He goes on in verse 29 saying, *“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”*

In verse 30-32 he writes, *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.”*

This is the kind of change that occurs in the life of one who becomes a follower of Jesus Christ—*“you have put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”*