

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc. www.dtmwebsite.org

Growing From Good Seed to Full Fruit

by Dan Trygg

“But you did not in this way experientially-learn (put-into-practice) Christ,²¹ if indeed you heard Him and were taught by Him, according as truth is in Jesus,²² y’all to put-aside (pt. in time) according to the former manner of life the old self, the one being corrupted according to the lusts of deceit,²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind,²⁴ and to put on (pt. in time) the new-and-unprecedented self, the one according to God created in righteousness and holy-devotion of the truth.” Ephesians 4:20-24

“...putting-aside (pt. in time) the old self with its practices,¹⁰ and putting-on (pt. in time) the new-and-fresh self who is being renewed (growing-up-new) to a full-recognition according to the image of the One who created him...” Colossians 3:9,10

We talked last time about how we need to “learn Christ”. This type of learning is not about ideas, concepts or theology. It is about *experience, application, and putting-into-practice*. Something has happened in our lives where we can now live a “Jesus-type life”, a way of living that was not a possibility before. This is not just a formula, or a new mental focus, or mind over matter, or a higher level of discipline. **It is not about us, ...our old human self, putting together some kind of new practice.** No. This is something totally different. It is a recognition that **our old self-ability is incapable of ever living a “Jesus-type life”.** No, ...this is based upon a totally new thing that God has introduced into our experience. In fact, it is about how He has made *us new, ...a new self, ...a new creature, ...a born-from-above life*. Paul called it a “mystery”, ...a plan that God had for ages past, but was hidden from view. When Jesus came, lived, died and rose again, and sent the Holy Spirit, **He brought into being an entirely new possibility for living that had not existed before.** To those who believe, the “promise of the Father” is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. **It is for every one of us in Christ.** You cannot be a child of God without being born of the Spirit. When we recognized that we were sinners, and took Jesus as our Savior, **the Spirit “regenerated us” or “re-birthed us”** (Jn. 1:12,13; Tit. 3:3-5). **We were “born from above”, “born again”, “brought forth” (as from a womb) to be His children, ...a new creation** (Jn. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:3,23; Jas. 1:18; 1 Jn. 3:1; 2 Cor. 5:17). **It is “Christ in us, the hope of the glory”** (Col. 1:26,27).

This is the “truth as it is in Jesus”, ...this is the new reality that is available for us to walk in. The problem is that we must “learn” this, ...we must develop the mindset, consciousness, and skill to embrace and walk in this new life.

This is an experimental, experiential process. Notice that, in both of the passages above, there is a “putting aside” of the former identity and way of living. The verb tenses indicate that **this is a momentary choice, ...in-the-moment, at-the-moment, for-the-moment.** It does not say that it is a “one-time choice” that will carry on for the rest of our lives, ...or even for the next hour.

Now, we *did* make a decision to trust in Jesus at a moment-in-time, but *that* decision brought about something that *does* continue forever. We were then “born from above” and a new identity was created within us. This new self is imperishable. Peter wrote, “You were born again, not from seed which is perishable, but imperishable, ...through the living and abiding (remaining) word of God” (1 Pet. 1:23). **So, the new self, the new person, is who we now are, ...the “new you” that was birthed at that moment of faith, and will continue on into eternity future.**

However, to experience that new life, and to walk in it, requires conscious, present, moment-by-moment choices. Why is this necessary? Because we have *both dynamics* at work in our lives: We have the “old person who is continually being corrupted by deceitful lusts” present with our lives, ...AND, we have the reality of the new person, and the leading of the Spirit, also present within us. This is *our* experiential reality, until we die or Jesus returns. **We have sin in our members, and we also have the Spirit.** We are still experiencing the fallen “Adam-nature”, even though we have been put into Christ, and bear His image in our new person. The default pattern, ...the customary way in which we learned to live as we grew up in this world..., is the “old person, with its practices”. In order to experience the new person, ...“life in the Spirit”..., we must consciously choose to engage with this new reality. **We must make a choice to “put aside the old” and “put on the new”. It begins as a choice!** Until we make a conscious choice, we are mostly operating by the old way of doing things, ...though we may sometimes find the Spirit influencing us even when we are *not* looking for Him! **If we want to learn to “walk in the Spirit” and “abide in Christ”, we must choose to pursue a greater awareness of His leading, and learn to follow Him, ...even when it is contrary to what we would normally do.**

So, again, **both of these passages say very similar things. They begin with a choice to consciously “put aside the old man along with its practices.”** In Ephesians 4:22, the Greek word literally means to “put away from” you. In Colossians 3:9, Paul uses a different Greek word, which literally means to **“undress, take off, strip off from oneself” the old person**, together with its practices. It is a very vivid word picture. Clearly, it is meant to be a conscious, deliberate decision and choice. **In Colossians, Paul gets very specific. He said, “Put to death whatever in you is worldly”**

(3:5 CSB), and then he lists a number of possibilities: “sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greediness, which is idolatry.” **What does he mean by “put to death”? Obviously, he means to stop doing these things. Give no “life” or “energy” to these things.** In spite of how our world actually seems to glorify such practices, Paul says that these are seriously offensive to God. “On account of these things the wrath of God is coming.” **But, lest we get too freaked out about our “bad behavior”, he reminds us, “In which things y’all formerly walked, when you were living in them.” These behaviors are not surprising, ...they are what people do when they are stuffing their pain, and pursuing pleasure to escape their inner discomfort and emptiness (Eph. 4:19). They were common behaviors for these new believers who had recently come to Christ. (Each of us undoubtedly has found ways to hide from inner discomfort and avoid dealing with truth.) Now, however, Paul is encouraging them to extinguish those behaviors, along with negative emotions and speech. They were to be “stripping off the former person together with its practices.”**

Notice that Paul does not get all “preachy” or “judgy”. His focus is on the *core issue*, not primarily the *outward behavior*. **The outward behaviors flow out of the “self” we are operating in.** If we are living in the “old person”, we are going to find ourselves having “old person attitudes, thoughts and behaviors”. We will experience and produce what the “flesh” produces (Gal. 5:19-21). If we are living in the “new person”, we will find ourselves experiencing an entirely different approach to our lives. We will set our mind on the things of the Spirit. **If we are walking in the Spirit, we will experience the fruit of the Spirit** (Gal. 5:22,23). We will glory or delight in Christ Jesus, and find our peace, joy and rest in Him. **Jesus clearly understood this. He said, “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, ...or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit”** (Matt. 12:33). The problem is not our *behavior*, ...the problem is the *source* or *nature* we are living out from. Remember that God demonstrated His love for us while we were His enemies, ...when we were not looking for Him or interested in Him (Rom. 5:8).

In order to “learn” to walk in the new nature, we need to turn away from the old mindset, attitudes and habitual behavior. *This* is not the goal or focus, however. **The Christian life is not about “controlling behavior”. It is not an “outside-in proposition”, as if cleaning up the outside would make us righteous on the inside.** No. That approach is only a formula for frustration, guilt and condemnation. **The mature Christian life is about learning to live as Jesus did, from the inside-out, ...from the Spirit through the new person. The old strategies we came to rely upon** for trying to make us feel good about ourselves (pride), or to “medicate” our pain, whether they are obviously sinful and addictive, ...or, if they may look positive, and are outwardly socially acceptable, ...if they keep us from “learning Christ”, they **are simply getting in the way of our discovering how to walk in the Spirit.** These are habits we have learned to help us cope *without God*. They give us momentary relief, or pleasure, but they do not solve our problems, or help us to grow in Christ. **They short-circuit our spiritual growth. They keep us going around the same cycle, over and over.**

It is important again to emphasize that we only know what we know. As we read the words of scripture, they are describing things to us that we have not fully experienced. If we *believe* what God has said, then we will *act on* what He has said, ...as nebulous as that may appear to us. In Ephesians 4, there is a “putting aside” of the old, followed by a “to be being renewed in the spirit of your mind”. The word for “renew” means to “become new, different and of a superior quality”. This is not just to revisit old thoughts, or to somehow revitalize what we may already know. **This is describing learning things we do not now know, and even learning to think and perceive things in a way that we had not been able to do before.** This makes sense. If we had been futile and empty in our thinking and reasonings before, we would expect that God intends to change that. He will make our minds become clear, our ability to observe and notice things to be sharpened, and our thought process more productive. **Our minds have been cluttered, confused and confounded by the darkness of sin and self-preoccupation. Now, God desires to open, clarify, and enable us to perceive and process things in new ways. The phrase, “in the spirit of our minds” may refer to a new spiritual awareness that had been shut down previously, but concerning which God is making us aware.** Like the spiritual person in 1 Corinthians 2:12-15, we are now being instructed by the Holy Spirit in ways that others are not.

Then, we are to “put on the new self”. There is a difference in the word for “new” in these two passages. In Ephesians 4, the “new” is a totally different and unprecedented self. The self we are in Christ is of a totally different nature and character. As Paul says, “it *has been created* in holiness and devotion to the truth”. It is like Jesus *already*. It is a “good tree” that Jesus spoke of. It *will* produce good fruit. **Somehow, we need to “clothe ourselves” or “get dressed in” or “wear” that new person who is already like Jesus.** Clearly, the message is that this is available to us to walk in and experience *now*. But, we must consciously “clothe ourselves” with this radically new person. Then, when we add the picture from Colossians 3, we are to put on the new or “fresh” person, who is “being renewed unto a full-recognition according to the image of the One creating” him or her. Here, the focus is on a fresh person growing up new until he or she becomes recognizable as being like Jesus. God has determined that we will come to be like Jesus (Rom. 8:29). **He has planted the seed of His new good tree in us already, but we are to grow up to become fruit that is recognizable as being from Him.** Experientially, we “put on” the new person, and grow to be like Jesus.