

Ephesians

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[0 : 00] Well, we welcome you to our November 9 class, and we are continuing to deal with a subject that is very, very critical for all believers.

And that has to do with how exactly are we supposed to cope with the flesh element that belongs to our old Adamic nature after we have become believers in Christ.

Before we came to faith in Christ, the old Adamic nature was all we had. That was the only thing we had to work with, because that represented our fallenness in Adam.

But because of the regeneration that is experienced through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, we receive a new nature. We receive the Spirit of God who indwells us as a believer.

And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Paul reminds us in the letter to the Corinthians, Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which you have of God, and you are not your own.

[1 : 08] You are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. So, the problem is, a great conflict that did not exist before is set up in the mind and heart of a believer, and it is the flesh versus the Spirit.

Before the Spirit of God came in to indwell us, all we had to rely upon was the convictions of our conscience.

And in our conscience that God has given us, that provides us with the ability to know the difference between right and wrong. But, it doesn't provide us with any real power to do the right.

It just either condemns or excuses us for our behavior. So, the conscience is a valuable thing. It is a gift of God. But, it is not sufficient.

The conscience can be seared. The conscience can be programmed. And the conscience can actually let you down. Because there is nothing infallible about the conscience.

[2 : 17] The Spirit of God who indwells us, of course, is infallible. I well remember one of the Disney cartoons came out a long time ago.

Remember Pinocchio and Jiminy Cricket? And Jiminy Cricket would sing this song to Pinocchio, and always let your conscience be your guide.

Well, your conscience can steer you in the wrong way, as well as in the right way. So, we need something that is infallible, and it's not the human conscience.

But, it is the Spirit of God and the Word of God that indwells the believer. And, when we talked about this, we came to this passage in Ephesians chapter 4, where we are told in verse 21, or verse, well, let's just start reading.

Start reading in verse 19. Being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you, and here when he says ye, he's talking about these new Ephesian Christians who have come out of their paganism and have been made new creatures in Christ.

[3 : 29] And, in verse 20, he reminds them by saying, But you have not so learned Christ. If so be that you have heard Him, and you have, and have been taught by Him, and you have, that you put off concerning the former conversation, the former lifestyle, the former attitudes and actions of the old man.

The old man is your old nature, your old Adam. God did not eliminate the old nature when He implanted the new person in you in the Spirit of God.

But, He did give you an ability to overcome that old nature by yielding to the new nature. And, it is our responsibility to do so, because we can.

Away with this business that says, I would like to, but I'm too weak. I just can't. Yes, you can. Our problem is, we don't want to.

The reason we don't want to is because we justify and we love our sin. We love our own way. We love doing our own thing. And, that's part of that old Adamic nature.

[4 : 52] And, when Paul tells us here that we are to put off and put on, he is saying, you can do this. So, we are to put off, verse 22, concerning the former conversation, that is, the former old man.

It's not talking about conversation like the way people talk and converse. That's not the meaning. This is an old English word. And, it literally means your manner of life. Your lifestyle. It means the way you used to live before Christ came in.

The values and norms that you had, your goals, agenda, etc. Those things all need to be put off. That's the old man. Which is corrupt. It is morally, spiritually corrupt.

Now, the Bible has nothing good to say about your old, fallen, Adamic nature. There is nothing good about it. And, there is nothing wrong with the new nature.

It is perfect. It is from God. So, this old nature is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

[6 : 01] This involves a whole new way of thinking. Because, now you have a new capacity to think in a different vein than before. And, that you put on the new man.

It is almost like he is talking about a garment. Where you are wearing an old coat. And, you take off the old coat. And, you put on the new.

And, the new is this new man that we are talking about. And, the old that is put off means it is to be rendered powerless. And, the best example I can give of this is a well-worn but adequate illustration about the theory of aerodynamics.

And, what enables a plane to fly. And, you have got the ever-present law of gravity. And, when that airplane takes off and leaves the ground and starts soaring through the air.

It doesn't mean that the law of gravity has been suspended and no longer exists. We all know what happens if that plane cuts its engines.

[7 : 10] He is going to find out very quickly that the law of gravity is still operative. The principle is the power of the thrust of those engines overcomes the law of gravity.

And, it surpasses it and is able to make that aircraft airborne and sustain it. Not because it is done away with the law of gravity.

But, because it is greater than the law of gravity. So, greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. And, if you think of that old nature as ever-present as the law of gravity.

And, the new nature being the dynamic thrust of aerodynamics that allows that plane to take flight. You've got a pretty apt analogy there.

And, that really kind of explains what happens. But, is the plane still subject to the law of gravity? You better believe it. And, we all know from plane crashes what happens.

[8 : 14] So, it is a very powerful concept. And, the question is, of course, exactly how do we go about doing that? You go about doing that with your will.

You choose to surrender to the right as opposed to the wrong. And, the key is your volition.

Your will. Paul, through the Spirit of God, is not demanding that we do something that is beyond us. As I've said before, God is not unreasonable in the demands he makes of us.

He does not ask us to do anything that he knows is beyond our ability. He is not that kind of a God. So, this putting off and putting on is something that is within our ability to do.

Verse 24, And, that you put on the new man, which after God, that is, we're clothed with this new power and new authority, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

[9 : 23] And, that is contrasted with verse 22, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust. So, you see the tremendous contrast between verse 22, the old man, and verse 24, the new man, which is after God.

And, then in verse 25, he says, Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

You ought not to lie to your neighbor any more than you would lie to yourself, any more than you would deceive yourself, because we are members one of another. We're all in this thing together. This is the commonality of the body. This is the oneness of the body of Christ. And, he likens it in other places to our physical body, with all of its organs and arms and legs and everything.

And, anything that you do to any part of your body to injure it, affects the whole body. It affects the whole body, because we are an integrated unit as a human being.

[10 : 36] And, we are the same in the spiritual body of Christ. We are all members one of another. Therefore, we are to encourage one another, build up one another, love one another, and lie not one to another.

But, every man speak truth with his neighbor. And, the question arose then, and he says, Let not the sun go down on your wrath, and turn the page, and neither give place to the devil.

Well, that implies that you can let him that stole steal no more. Rather, let him labor, working with his hands a thing that is good. And, then we came to this subject.

Well, how exactly are we able to do that? And, as we left off the last session, because I didn't have time or didn't take time to go far enough, I really feared that I might have given a wrong impression about this thing.

And, if so, I certainly want to correct it. Because, when I say, you can do this, that your volition is in charge, and that you are responsible for using it, I certainly did not mean to give the impression that all that is needed is just your willpower.

[11 : 51] Because, you have the power to rise above the flesh. Because, you don't. And, that certainly is not what I meant. And, the distinction is, the volition is yours.

The will to do this is yours. The willingness to put off the old man and put on the new is entirely up to you and your volition.

But, the power that is needed for living this kind of life that we are called upon to live is not ours. It is beyond us. We don't have the power. We do have the will. You've heard the expression, The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

What's that talking about? He's talking about the spirit of God that indwells you, is desirous and willing to control your life.

[13 : 03] But, the flesh, which is that old Adamic nature, is weak. Caves in. Gives in. Succumbs to temptation.

That's the weakness of the flesh. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Now, how is it that we activate the spirit so that the spirit of God can provide the power that we don't have?

And that brings us right back to this thing, volition again. And you may or may not recall the illustration that I gave, and I wish I could think of a better one, but I can't.

And it explains the distinction, I think, between the human will and volition, and the power that is needed to do what needs to be done, and that is to live the godly life.

And if you recall, I illustrated this with a firearm. You could take a firearm, a pistol, and load a round in the chamber, and pull the trigger.

[14 : 19] And when you pull the trigger, the firing pin hits that round, that shell, and provides an explosion within that confined chamber of metal that encases the power of explosion, and it is looking for an outlet.

And the outlet for that explosion is the muzzle of the gun. And the explosion propels that projectile, that bullet, through the barrel out to wherever it is aimed.

The power is not yours. But the trigger needs to be pulled. The trigger, fellas, represents your volition.

You pull the trigger. You don't provide the power. The mechanism and the explosion provides the power. That's like the Spirit of God providing the power.

Power is not yours. We are weak through the flesh. We don't have the ability to live the kind of life that honors God on a consistent basis. We don't.

[15 : 41] We just don't. And we need to come to grips with that. Because we are all sold under sin. We are all children of the flesh. We all have our own desires and our wishes.

And we can succumb to temptation very easily. So we need to understand, we in and of ourselves do not have the ability to live the life that pleases God in our own person.

But God does. And the question is, are we willing to pull the trigger and unleash the real source of power? The trigger is your volition.

If you don't want to pull the trigger, you're not going to. And you will not have the power that the Spirit of God provides. You will have only the power of the flesh.

I think this is precisely what Paul meant when he said, I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I. But Christ lives in me.

[16 : 48] And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith or the faithfulness of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

That's what we're talking about here. So in Romans chapter 7, in the sheet that is page 678, Paul is talking about having come to faith in Christ.

And at the top of the page, he says, Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law. And the reason for that is, is by the law is the knowledge of sin.

In other words, sin has not occurred where there is no prohibition of it. But once the law is in place, and then you violate the law, then you know that you have sinned.

And the law is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. And Paul said, I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence, or all manner of coveting.

[18 : 08] Now, what verse 8 is saying is, sin, that is this sinful, fallen, Adamic nature that we all possess, that sin nature, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of coveting, covetousness, covetous ways, and so on.

The translations are given here. Moffat says, But when sin had gained advantage ground by means of the commandment, that is the law, it stirred up within me all manner of lust.

And the principle here kind of goes like this. Just tell a man what it is that he may not do under any circumstances. And that's the thing he wants to do.

That's the thing he wants. Out of all the trees of the garden, you may freely eat. But this one tree, no. That's a no-no. And all of a sudden, that became the most attractive tree in the whole bunch. That's the one I really want to eat from. That's human nature. We naturally resent restrictions. We just want to be our own thing, do our own thing, don't want anybody telling me what to do.

[19 : 30] I want to row my own boat. It wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law, sin was dead. For I, and here's a really important key coming up.

Without the law, sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once. And we dealt with that to some degree probably many months ago.

I don't know how fresh it is in your mind. But, but Paul is here giving his own personal testimony of how he struggles with this thing that we struggle with of wanting to do the right thing and we end up doing the wrong thing because we cave in.

We know better. We know what we want to do. We know what we ought to do. We know what we should do. But he says, but the ability to do it, I just don't find it.

So, I was alive without the law once. And I think he's talking about here from the time he was born. He was born in a state of innocence.

[20 : 40] Born with an old Adamic nature, but one that had not been activated because a baby doesn't have that capacity.

So, he is saying that he was born spiritually alive. And I don't know if you thought of it or not, but this is the basis for our believing that babies that die in infancy before they reach adulthood or in accountability, they enter the presence of the Lord because we view the substitutionary work of Christ to be all-encompassing.

Christ died for the sins of the world. Not most of them, but all of them. Christ died to render every human being savable.

Not saved, but savable so that no one is outside the provision that Christ made for them in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Now, whether or not they choose to take advantage of what Christ did for them, that's another matter. But, the provision is there because as in Adam all die, how many does that all mean?

[22 : 05] It means everybody. In Adam, in Adam, our humanity is locked up. we all died in Adam.

And the Romans five principle that even so in Christ all are made alive. That means the totality of redemption was included in the death of Christ.

This provides us with a gospel to preach and to tell people Jesus Christ died for your sins. All you need to do is personalize that truth by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ as an act of your will and God will save you.

That's the gospel. So, when Paul says, I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, that is, when the law came to his person and he was able to break it, when was that?

We don't know. that was his age of accountability. We don't know when it was and no answer is given and I suspect it is because for different people it's at different times.

[23 : 24] Sin is awakened in the life of a child sometimes at a very early age, sometimes later, sometimes, who knows, grade school, whenever a child becomes accountable and responsible for their own actions, they know the difference between right and wrong and Paul said, when that time came in my life, even though I had been redeemed by the finished work of Christ and I was spiritually alive in Christ, when that law came and I broke it, I died.

I died spiritually. I was born spiritually automatically. Now I died spiritually. I am dead to God. I'm still alive to all the world.

I eat and drink and sleep, but I am now dead to God. And what do I need? I need to be born again. I need a new birth.

I need to be regenerated. I need to regain that which was lost in my innocence. When the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, in other words, sin used the righteous holy law of God against me.

[24 : 52] Sin. Sin. pointed out my infraction of the law and said, aha, there's the law, there's the commandment. See what you did?

Sin. And the wages of sin is death. Paul, you are dead. You are dead to God. That's what he's talking about here when he says, for sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me and by it slew me.

Now, he's very much alive physically, but he's giving us his personal testimony and he's saying, I lost that innocence with which I was born and was one of those in Christ and when I volitionally used my will to sin against God, the law slew me.

and the need is for regeneration. Is there something wrong with all? No, no, no, the problem is not with the law. The law, Paul writes to Timothy, the law is just and holy and good.

Nothing wrong with the law. But what's wrong is the people to whom the law was given, they were not up to it because the law is holy but man is unholy.

[26 : 15] There is a basic incompatibility there. That's the problem. This is why man needs salvation. This is why man needs to be brought by faith to God so that that status can be restored.

By it, slew me, the law is holy and the commandment holy and just and good. Was then that which is good made death to me?

God forbid. nothing wrong with the law. Don't blame the law. But sin that it might appear sin, that is sin that it might be shown up for what it really is, working death in me by that which is good.

And good speech says it was sin that did so so that it might be recognized as sin became because even through something that was good, that is the law, it affected my death.

And the New English Bible says it was sin that killed me and thereby sin exposed its true character. It used a good thing, the law, to bring about my death.

[27 : 34] That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. Fellas, there is the culprit.

That's the problem. That's the incurable terminal disease with which humanity is infected and it is called sin.

And there are places where you talk like this and you talk about this, they'll just laugh you right out of the room. Because that's what spiritual ignorance does.

And the late night comedians would make a big joke of this thing called sin because they are absolutely clueless as to what the real problem is.

Joe? Because the life is in their work. That's right. Absolutely. And men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

[28 : 41] Why do you suppose thieves operate at night under the cover of darkness where their deed will not be exposed?

It's because they've got a better chance of getting away with it, not being caught. Man is drawn to darkness. And Paul talks about when man does not recognize God and not glorify him as God, the result is their foolish hearts are darkened.

Romans 1. Really serious stuff. Hey, you want to know what's wrong with the world? This is it. This is it.

So, what's the remedy? The gospel. And it's the only remedy there is. It's the only thing that can provide the power that is necessary.

It's the only thing that can provide the thrust of the moral engines to overcome the power of gravity, the power of sin, is what Christ has done in us.

[29 : 45] And it is a marvelous, marvelous thing that God has provided for us. In fact, I've been dealing with this issue for over 50 years, actually, for over 60 years.

And I've never gotten used to it. I've never gotten over it. It still captivates me thoroughly. It's amazing. Hey, appreciate your presence and thoughts this morning.

Any quick comment or question to Dan? I think that I know I sin and I accept that. It's when I think that I can do something about that and trying myself.

That's when things go haywire. Absolutely. As long as you know that Christ died on the cross for your sins and you are forgiven and he accepts the fact you are sins and you can move ahead.

Amen. Amen. I appreciate that. That's well put. Thank you. Anything else before we okay we'll continue this next week and then we'll get back to Ephesians 4 because we've got some really good stuff coming up there that I know you'll appreciate.

[30 : 58] Thank you. Thank you.