

# OFF WITH THE OLD, ON WITH THE NEW

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*Ephesians 4:17-24*

## Introduction:

There is a word that is not used much any more in our churches. It is the word converted, or conversion. Yet conversion is an important concept for the believer in Christ. What does it mean?

→ Illust. – bowl or cup

- upside down – empty, dark, useless
- turn it over – full of light and useful.

The cup has been converted, turned around, changed. The word conversion is also used to refer to a change from one form or state to another. When you apply heat, water is converted to steam – there is a change which takes place.

Now, let's come back to Ephesians 4. Review:

- Ch. 1-3 – Our position in Christ
- Chapter 4 – Our life in Christ, our practice. V. 1 – the urge to a walk worthy of our calling in Christ.
- vv. 1-6 – the emphasis is on Unity, through humility
- vv. 7-16 – the emphasis is on maturity
  - 7-11 – Gifts according to God's grace
  - 12-13 – preparation for service
  - 14-16 – a picture of what a mature body looks like – stability, security, supportive.

Now, if this is to happen there must be a change in our lives, we need to be converted, turned around in our thinking and our behaviour. Paul says in v. 17 – “you must no longer live as the Gentiles do...”

In this passage Paul begins a lengthy section which continues through 6:9, in which he draws some logical conclusion, in terms of life and morals, that follow from being members of Christ's body.

*(mention the question this week about how a mature body acts...)*

Paul begins by looking at our old lifestyle and that is where we are going to begin today, by looking at the unconverted way of life – the life of the Gentiles, the way of the heathen, the kind of life we had before Christ.

## The Unconverted Way of Life vv. 17-19

*Read v. 17* – He describes the thinking of the ungodly person as futile. The word used is translated consistently in the KJV as “vanity.” It is defined as “*what is devoid of truth and appropriateness; perverseness, depravity.*” The thought is that of mental folly and carries the connotation of thinking which is not only foolish, but is morally wrong or corrupt. In the next couple of verses he describes the result of their morally corrupt way of life and thought...

A. Their understanding is darkened – consequently they are separated from God – see Romans 1:21 – alienated from God, did not worship Him.

There is a complete inability to understand what is right and good.

As one writer has said:

*“A man who is intemperate has no just view of self-control.*

*A man who is unchaste has no perception of the beauty of purity.*

*A man who is covetous has no perception of the beauty of benevolence.”*

You see, indulgence in sin not only destroys the body, it destroys the mind and takes away all appreciation of truth and morality. The reason is the hardening of the heart. Because of continued indulgence in sin, the heart becomes hard, the mind becomes corrupt, and they are separated from God. Not only that, but ...

B. Their sensitivity or feeling is gone – they have lost all sensitivity, and have given themselves over to sensuality. A deadened conscience, so they are destroying themselves without even realizing it.

→ [From Illy]... HURTING WITHOUT PAIN

Dr. Paul Brand was the first medical authority to say that the loss of fingers and toes from leprosy is due mainly to infection and injury. He showed that major tissue damage occurs because the patient loses the warnings of pain. Leprosy attacks the central nervous system and acts like a shot of Novocaine. Of course, you're thankful for the deadening effect of such a drug before the dentist begins drilling on your tooth, but when you walk out of his office with your mouth all numb, and you bite a chunk off the inside of your cheek without feeling anything, you know in a small way what a person with leprosy is up against.

Paul says, *"They have become callous..."* They are destroying themselves without realizing it, and the result is that they *"...have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity."*

The sad thing is that when the unconverted person gives himself over to the practice of every kind of impurity, there comes a point when God also will give him up to go on in the way of life he has chosen. Turn for a few moments to Romans 1. *Read vv. 18-32, commenting...*

God gave them up...

- To impurity – acts of debauchery, corruption of the body
- To dishonorable passions – corruption of the desires
- To a debased mind – corruption of the thinking.

That is the eventual result of the unconverted life – a life given over to sensuality and every kind of impurity.

## The Challenge vv. 20-21

But you know better than that – this is Paul's word to the Ephesians. Look at v. 20 - *read it*. The way the original is written, it could be translated as, *"But you not so; you have learned Christ."* Concerning this statement, Matthew Henry says in his commentary,

*"Those who have learned Christ are saved from the darkness and defilement which others lie under; and, as they know more, they are obliged to live in a better manner than others. It is a good argument against sin that we have not so learned Christ. Learn Christ!*

*Christ is the lesson; we must learn Christ: and Christ is the teacher; we are taught by him."*

*Read verse 21.* In this verse Paul's assumption is that his readers—first the Ephesians and then us as well—have indeed heard the truth and responded to it. It is the truth that is in Jesus Christ that will change the way we live. It is knowing the truth that is in Jesus that will bring about the conversion that Paul demands of us in this passage.

As the Spirit of God takes the truth of God as found in the Word of God and teaches it to us and applies it to us, we will find our lives changed, converted from what we once were to a new way of life.

## The Process of Conversion vv. 22-24

So how does this all happen? In vv. 22-24 he describes the process of change – conversion. (Discuss the immediacy of conversion at the moment of salvation, versus the process of change)

There is a 3 stage process shown here.

### A. Put off your old self – v. 22

Lay aside – put off, renounce everything that pertained to the old life—your former corrupt nature. The characteristics of the unconverted man are to be put off. All those uncontrolled and deceitful passions which seek to control us need to be put aside.

### B. Have your mind made new – v. 23

This whole conversion process is a process of renewal – being made new. There has to be a change in your thinking. Remember what Paul said about the unconverted person, walking in the futility of their minds. We need to have a change of mind and heart – that is really what repentance is about.

### C. Put on the new self – v. 24

The new nature – perfect, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. This is the new nature which is to control a new lifestyle – the converted life.

There are a couple of important things to note here –

1. The description that Paul used is that of putting off and putting on. The picture is really that of changing your clothes – explain...
2. None of this is possible without the new birth. There is no conversion without regeneration – explain ...

So what does the converted life look like? In the verses that follow, Paul gives us a number of characteristics of this new life. We are not going to into these today, but he deals with some very specific things such as lying and stealing, as well as more general behaviours regarding how we treat one another. Lord willing, will look at those verses next week.

## Conclusion

Conversion is a change, a turnaround – off with the old, on with the new. Has your life changed since you came to faith in Jesus Christ? If not, are you sure about your relationship with God. I remind you of the words of Paul in vv. 20-24. After having described the old life he said ... *read verses 20-24 again.*