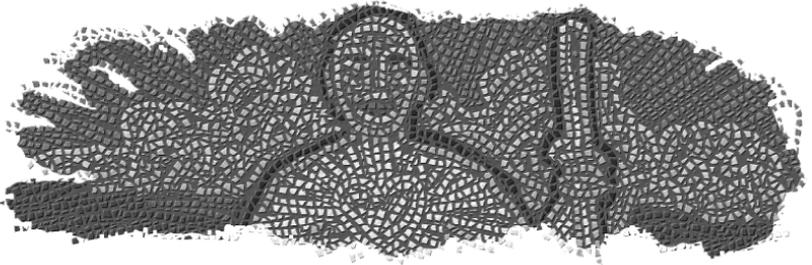


Living *the* New Life



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Rom. 1:26-32; 3:10-18; 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:9-16; Eph. 4:17-32; Phil. 4:8, 9.*

Memory Text: “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you” (*Ephesians 4:32, NKJV*).

Paul’s presentation on the practical implications of Christian unity began with a call to Christians, both Jew and Gentile, that they “walk worthy of the calling with which [they] were called” (*Eph. 4:1, NKJV*). This walk makes several demands of us. The first is preservation of the unity of Christ’s body in the midst of diversity (*vss. 1-12*). The second, our study this week, deals with walking in a new way, which is crucial for maintaining the unity Paul talks about.

This new way is neither a modification nor an improvement of the old. It is a radical transformation that rejects old values and adopts a totally new lifestyle—in thought, character, values, relationships, and motives. It is passing from death to life. It is a change of owners: from Satan to Christ.

The Week at a Glance: What kind of picture of humanity does Paul depict? How is the life of a Christian to be changed after accepting Christ? How is the new life to be manifested among Christians? How is this new life related to the unity of the church as a whole? What role does the Holy Spirit play in our new life? How are we to be “imitators” (*Eph. 5:1, NKJV*) of God?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 26.

Put Away the Old *(Eph. 4:17-22)*

A life “worthy of the calling” (*Eph. 4:1, NKJV*) is not only a life of unity and growth as we saw last week but also a new life. This new life is a series of negatives and positives. The first negative is “put off . . . the old man” (*vs. 22*). The Christian life begins with a clean and clear break from the past, and Paul appeals to the Ephesians to “no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk” (*vs. 17, NKJV*). To the Romans Paul used a more serious language and called upon them to crucify the old man “that the body of sin might be done away with” (*Rom. 6:6, NKJV*).

List some of the characteristics of the old man as mentioned in Ephesians 4:17-24. Compare with Romans 3:10-18. What kind of picture does he depict of humanity in general? What, if anything, has changed in the more than nineteen centuries since Paul wrote?

Notice, in his depiction of the Ephesians, that Paul uses words such as “darkness,” “ignorance,” and “blindness” that led them into moral decadence. Their mind, because of sin, could not comprehend spiritual truth. As a result, their lives were wasted in seeking God either in themselves or in worthless idols or in vain philosophy. They indulged in wishful teachings and lived in spiritual darkness (*Eph. 4:18; see also Rom. 1:19-21*). Their moral sensitivity was so compromised that they could make no distinction between good and evil. The pleasures of the body, particularly immoral and deviant behavior, became their favorite pastime. They lived in “lewdness,” “uncleanness,” and “greediness” (*Eph. 4:19, NKJV; see also Rom. 1:26-32*).

Such was their life—the life of the old man—before the Gentiles came to Christ. Paul, therefore, appeals to the believers: “Don’t ever go back to the old.”

Look at verse 19. What is Paul saying there? What does it mean to be “past feeling”? How does one become “past feeling”? In what ways have you experienced this negative principle in your own life? Why is this a danger to anyone, even a professed Christian? What is the only protection against this problem?

“Put On the New” (*Rom. 12:1, 2; Eph. 4:20-24*)

Having told the believers to “put off . . . the old man” (*Eph. 4:22*), what counsel does Paul give? *Eph. 4:22-24*.

In accepting Christ, the believers “put off” the old lifestyle of the Gentiles. But putting off is not enough. Christianity is not a religion of negatives. It expects the believer to rise to a higher ground of moral and spiritual living. So Paul urges: “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind and . . . put on the new man” (*Eph. 4:23, 24, NKJV*).

If the life of the old man were characterized by a futile mind, the life of the new man is distinguished by a renewed mind. “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (*Rom. 12:2, NKJV*).

How are believers to be renewed in the mind? *Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:9-16; Phil. 4:8, 9*.

After describing the vain, dark, and sinful life of the Gentiles (*Eph. 4:17-20*), Paul asserts that they were taught to give up such a life when they came to Christ. By using three words—learned, heard, taught—Paul reminds the believers they already well know the effect of salvation and new birth on their lifestyle. This truth did not come to them from any human source but from Jesus Himself (*Eph. 4:21*). Paul’s use of the name Jesus is not accidental. He wants the believers to know that the historic Jesus—the incarnate, the crucified, the risen, and the ascended One—is Himself the Truth, Himself the Revealer of truth (*John 14:6*).

“Those who receive the Saviour become sons of God. . . . Their minds are changed. . . . From cherishing supreme love for self, they come to cherish supreme love for God and for Christ.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1117.

In your experience in becoming a Christian, did you find that suddenly your thoughts and heart and motives and actions became pure? If not, what practical, day-by-day things can you do that will help you reach this desired goal? At the same time, what are you doing (if anything) that can hinder this work of purification?

Live the New Life *(Eph. 4:25-29)*

The apostle is no lofty theoretician. At one moment he can lift us to majestic heights of theology; at another he can bring us down to the realities of our neighborhood. So, he outlines four imperatives of the new life. They are so simple yet so vital to maintain good relationships.

1. Put away lying; speak the truth *(Eph. 4:25)*. Falsehood and hypocrisy hurt relationships and destroy trust. Truth, on the other hand, builds trust and confidence, strengthens relationships, and preserves unity.

In what ways has lying hurt your relationships with others?

2. “Be angry and do not sin” *(vs. 26, NKJV)*. As humans, we inevitably face situations that anger us, and maybe even justly so. In any case, in times of anger, three cautions need to be heeded: Do not sin; that is, do not let it lead to resentment or transgression of the law. Do not let the sun go down without correcting the situation. Do not give the devil an opportunity to use anger to destroy unity and relationship.

How has the devil used anger against you and your relationships?

3. Do not steal, but work *(vs. 28)*. Thieving takes many forms—from downright stealing to withholding what rightfully belongs to another to destroying another’s name or character. A Christian lives on a high moral plane. Honest work, unselfish life, generosity, and preserving the other are marks of the new life in Christ.

Using the definition listed above, how has “thieving” impacted you or someone you know in a negative way?

4. Guard your tongue, be edifying in speech *(vs. 29)*. Words are powerful tools. Used well, they can be a great blessing. But Paul warns against “corrupt” talk. The Greek word for “corrupt” also means “rotten.” Rottenness, vulgarity, swearing, and gossip have no place in our speech. A Christian’s speech should edify and build.

When was the last time you were hurt by damaging words? Also, look at your answers for the day’s questions. What do they tell you about how important living as the “new man” *(vs. 24)* is for the unity Paul talks about?

“Grieve Not the Holy Spirit” (*Eph. 4:30*)

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (*Eph. 4:30, NKJV*).

The church at Ephesus had its beginnings when the apostle laid hands on the believers to receive the Holy Spirit (*see Acts 19:1-7*). No wonder Paul speaks so much about the Holy Spirit in Ephesians—at least twelve times.

Look up the texts below and write down what Paul says about the Spirit:

Eph. 2:18 _____

Eph. 3:16 _____

Eph. 5:9 _____

Eph. 6:17 _____

Elsewhere Paul states that the Spirit gives life (*2 Cor. 3:6*), sonship (*Rom. 8:16*), understanding (*1 Cor. 2:10-16*), fruits (*Gal. 5:22*), hope for the future (*Gal. 5:5*), spiritual gifts (*1 Cor. 12:4-11*), sanctification (*Rom. 15:16*), indwelling power (*Rom. 8:11*), etc.

Paul clearly placed great importance on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and the congregation. Hence his charge: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.” The statement at once reveals that the Spirit is not simply divine power but an active Person in the Godhead, sensitive to relationships. To grieve the Holy Spirit is equivalent to grieving the Father and the Son. All we have to do is read the Bible, and we can see how much God cares about our actions and how our sin and disobedience bring pain to Him. There are moral and spiritual responsibilities on all who are brought into God’s family by the Spirit; and when we violate those responsibilities, we grieve Him. It’s hard for us to understand that God could actually be pained by what we do, but that’s what our Bible tells us, and certainly the life of Jesus shows us the intimate care God has for His creatures. Thus, if He loves us and cares for us, it’s not surprising that He could be pained by what we do.

What things might you have done in the past 24 hours that would have grieved the Holy Spirit? Were these actions inevitable? If not, why did you do them?

“Be Imitators of God” *(Eph. 4:31–5:1, NKJV)*

Paul’s command to those who are saved and now living as one united body of Jews and Gentiles is to walk in the new life. This new life involves many details: putting off, putting on, persevering, and not grieving the Spirit. In today’s lesson, Paul presents a one-phrase summary of the new way: “Be imitators of God” *(Eph. 5:1, NIV)*.

How can we, as fallen human beings, be “imitators of God”? What does Paul mean here?

After telling us to be imitators of God, Paul then makes the charge personal and intimate: “as dear children” *(vs. 1, NKJV)*. When a parent and child have a close and intimate relationship, spending time with each other and sharing life activities, often the child tends to be like the parent. Thus, the more time we spend with God in prayer, meditation, and study, the more like Him we can become.

“Just as children imitate their parents, so we should imitate Christ. His great love for us led him to sacrifice himself so that we might live. Our love for others should be of the same kind—a love that goes beyond affection to self-sacrificing service.”—*Life Application Bible, on Ephesians 5:1, 2.*

In Ephesians 4:32 Paul gives three qualities that should mark our lives. What are they, and how is each one, in its own way, a reflection of God? As you write down your answer, ask yourself what you could do to better manifest these qualities in your own life.

- _____
- _____
- _____

It was Christmas Eve. A child in tattered clothes was looking through the glittering windows of a store, her eyes focused on a pretty doll, but she had no way of getting it. Just then a man removed that doll. The little girl’s face fell but soon lighted up when the man came out of the store and gave the doll to her. She looked up and asked, “Are you God?” Maybe no one has ever said something quite like that to you, but in what ways have you reflected the character of God to someone recently?

Further Study: *Christ's transforming work.* "Jesus Himself, in His infinite mercy, is working on human hearts, effecting spiritual transformations so amazing that angels look on with astonishment and joy. The same unselfish love that characterizes the Master is seen in the character and life of His true followers. Christ expects that men will become partakers of His divine nature while in this world, thus not only reflecting His glory to the praise of God, but illuminating the darkness of the world with the radiance of heaven."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 731.

Unrenewed members. "The accession of members who have not been renewed in heart and reformed in life is a source of weakness to the church. This fact is often ignored. Some ministers and churches are so desirous of securing an increase of numbers that they do not bear faithful testimony against unchristian habits and practices."—Page 172.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 There are those who believe that the Christian concept of basic human sinfulness is wrong, even damaging. How would you respond to someone who holds such views?
- 2 Have someone in class read aloud the second Ellen G. White quote listed above and open a discussion on what she is saying. How do we strike the right balance here; that is, having a church in which sinners are welcomed and brought to the Cross while, at the same time, upholding the high standards of conduct the Christian life requires?
- 3 In class, ask those who are willing to talk about someone who truly was an "imitator of God." Who was that person, what did he or she do, and what impact did that person have on your life?
- 4 Go around the class and have each person answer this question: "Name one great change Christ has brought into your life." Discuss the various answers.

The Missing Sign

by ELIAS RAIMBUSE

I am a police officer in Papua New Guinea. A few years ago I was transferred to a town in the southern highlands of Papua New Guinea to command a new unit. I went to look over the territory where I would work. It was lovely, but something was missing: I could not find an Adventist church. I searched the city and the countryside, but I did not see the familiar three angels logo that identifies the Adventist church. I wondered if I should accept the assignment to move here if there was no church for my family to attend.

When I told my family that I could not find a church, we decided to pray about it for a week. God showed us that He wanted us to move to the new territory. We packed our things and made the ten-hour trip to our new home. The family enjoyed the beauty of the area and quickly settled into our new home. With no church nearby, we worshiped on our veranda.

One day a man came to repair a leak in our roof. When he finished, he asked my wife, "Are you Adventist?" Surprised, she told him yes, we are Adventists. The man smiled broadly. "I am an Adventist too. But we do not have a church in town, so I worship at home." Later when we talked, the man told me about a teacher at a nearby school who also was Adventist. We met together and decided to hold our worships in a classroom at the school. Later we learned about a former police officer who lived not far who also was a believer, and we invited him to join our group.

One day I asked the police officer if we could get some land on which to build a church.

"I have a piece of land!" he said. "I will give it to the church if you build a chapel on it!" We went to see the land, which was located on the main road. It was perfect! We cut down the undergrowth to mark the boundary of the land for a church, then we registered the land and our congregation with the local mission.

Before we began to build the chapel, I erected a sign with the familiar three angels logo on it. I wanted everyone to know that this land and the church that would one day stand there belonged to the Seventh-day Adventists.

We now have a small chapel on the land, and the congregation is growing nicely as word spreads that Adventists have entered the town. I am glad that God used simple people—a police officer, a repairman, and a teacher—to form a new congregation in a remote area of Papua New Guinea. He can use you, too, wherever you live.

ELIAS RAIMBUSE is a sergeant in the Papua New Guinea police force.