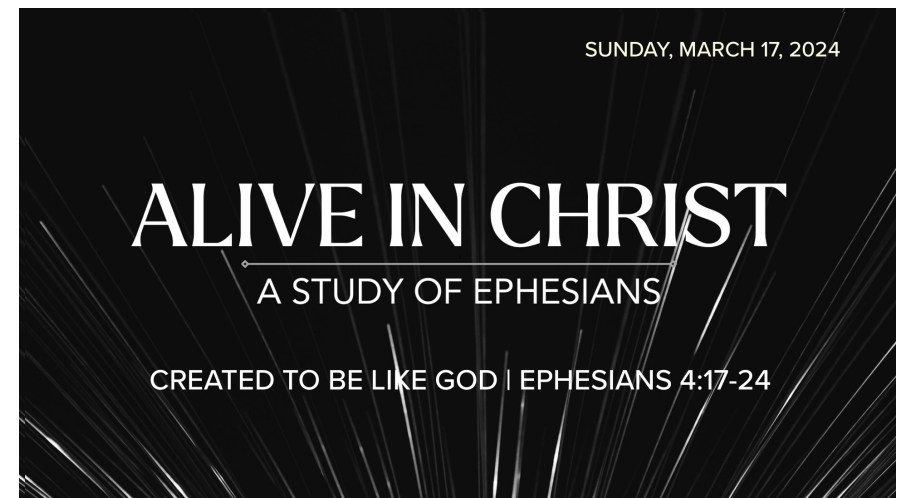


4. The bridge between “putting off the old person” and putting on “the new person” is “to be made new in the attitude or our minds.” This is a present passive infinitive. The fact that it is passive means that “making us new” is God’s work, not our own. The present tense highlights the fact that this is an ongoing process.
- a. What do you think it means to be made new in the attitude (or disposition) of our mind?
  - b. How are we made new in the attitude of our mind?
  - c. Even though God is the one who makes us new, what is our responsibility in the process?



I have always been fascinated by the game of chess.

I love the scenes in film that capture a young prodigy playing a series of games with more seasoned masters, moving in rapid succession from one board to the other, not only anticipating the moves of her opponents, but her next moves as well, defeating and confounding a number of more experienced players.

I once read an account of two Texas Rangers who, in their long hours on horseback, would create a chess board in their mind and call out their moves to each other remembering where each piece was positioned and which pieces remained on the board.

Then there is the phenomena of three dimensional chess. Three transparent boards positioned one above the other, where players make moves both horizontally and vertically at the same time.

Biblical truths often come to us in three dimensions as well. Consider your salvation. Our most common way of speaking of our salvation is in the past tense. “I was saved at a student gathering my freshman year in college.” But the Bible speaks of our salvation as a past event, a present reality, and a future expectation. We have been saved, we are being saved, and we will one day be completely and thoroughly saved.

In Ephesians 4 Paul refers to our life in Christ as “putting off the old self with is being corrupted by its evil desires, and putting on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

If you are in Christ you have already put off your old person, and put on a whole new person. Yet you need to continually put off the old and put on the new, and you will one day definitively putt off the old and put on the new.

## AN EMPTY WAY OF LIFE (vv. 17-19)

*<sup>17</sup> So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. <sup>19</sup> Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.*

1. In verse 17 Paul insists that “you must no longer live as Gentiles do.” Ironically Paul’s readers are Gentile. In Christ, they have taken on an entirely new identity and as a result they are to adopt an entirely new way of life. The tired old categories of Jew and Gentile no longer apply because God has created “in himself one new person out of the two, reconciling both of them to God through the cross... (2:15-16).”

How does the gospel both celebrate our differences and at the same time create a far richer sense of unity in Christ?

2. Paul is describing the same reality in these verses that he has already described in Romans.

*ROMANS 1:21, 24 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened... <sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts...*

- a. How does leaving God out of the equation lead to a “futile” or “empty” way of thinking and living?
  - b. According to these passages what are some devastating consequences of “futile thinking?”
3. In Romans Paul tells us that “God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts (Romans 1:24)” in Ephesians he tells us “they have given themselves over to sensuality (v. 19).”

How can both of these be true at the same time?

## THE DYNAMICS OF OUR NEW LIFE IN CHRIST (vv. 20-24)

*<sup>20</sup> That, however, is not the way of life you learned <sup>21</sup> when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

1. A more formal translation of verse 20 might read “But you did not learn Christ is this way... when you heard about him, and were taught in him.” We are not simply learning a way of life, we are “learning Christ.” In addition, we are not taught “about Christ” we are taught “in Christ.” Paul concludes with a nice rhetorical flourish when he refers to “truth that is in Jesus.” Paul seldom refers to Jesus without a royal title such as “Our Lord,” “the Lord Jesus Christ,” “Jesus Christ our Lord” or simply “Christ Jesus.” In this particular instance Paul uses Jesus’ personal name, to remind us just how intensely personal all of this is.

What do you think it means to “learn Christ” to be “taught in him” and to come to know “truth in Jesus?”

2. Paul describes the dynamics of our new life in Christ in three bold moves, we “put off,” “are made new” and “put on.” Paul uses the image of taking off one set of clothes and putting on a new one to describe our relationship with Christ, but we are doing far than simply taking off an old set of clothes, we are taking off an old person and putting on a new one.
  - a. How does Paul describe the old person?
  - b. While we put off the old person the moment we came to know Christ, what are some of the characteristics and patterns of that old that we need to continually put off or lay aside (Hint: Paul describes many of these in details in Ephesians 4:25-5:2)?
  - c. How does he describe the new person?
3. We were initially created in God’s image as a reflection of his heart and character (Genesis 1:26-27). In the Old Testament, God promises to give us “a new heart and put a new spirit in us; I will remove from us our heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 26:26).” In his 2nd Letter Paul tells us, “If anyone is in Christ the new creation has come: The old is gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17).” In Galatians Paul he continues, “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation (Galatians 6:15).” So far in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul has already told us “we were are God’s handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10), and that God’s “purpose was to create in himself one new [person] out of the two [Jew and Gentile], and.. to reconcile both of them to God through the cross (Ephesians 2:15-16).”
  - a. In what ways do creation and new creation determine who we are and form our identity?
  - b. What does the fact, we are a whole new person in Christ, mean for our understanding and experience of the Christian life?