

Ephesians 4:17-24

August 16, 2009 – 11th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

A Whole New Way to Live

† **Out of the darkness of ignorance (vv.17-19)**

† **Into a bright, new you (vv.20-24)**

In the name of Jesus Christ, our light, dear “children of light” in the Lord:

Sounds like a commercial doesn't it? **Into a bright, new you.** But look at the first part: **Out of the darkness of ignorance?** “If I must admit that, maybe I don't want your **Whole New Way to Live!**”

It's difficult jumping into the middle of Paul's epistle. He's already spent three chapters showing “*the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus,*” they “*were dead in...transgressions and sins...by nature objects of [God's] wrath.*” (2:1,3) This is not a commercial for getting people into the church. It's clear counsel for all who already confess their total depravity, and by grace through faith accept God's awesome forgiveness paid in blood on Calvary's cross. The Lord's Apostle Paul has been proclaiming the miraculous unity of the body of Christ. Now it's all about living as “*children of light,*” truly **A Whole New Way to Live.** Paul and every Christian rejoice to be delivered ...

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“*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.*” “*Gentiles,*” non-Jews, did not have the benefit of Old Testament prophets and Moses' Law in their upbringing. Their empty, purposeless life has no idea why they're here or where they're going. Intelligent ones think they evolved from slime and must die to make room for higher life forms. Survival of the fittest was not new with Darwin. He devolved to serving self – so familiar:

“*Being darkened in their understanding and alienated from the life of God, through ignorance in them because of the hardening of their hearts, such people having become callous, give themselves over to shameless sinning into working at every kind of impurity – always wanting more.*” (TPA)

How dark to legalize the invasion of the womb to destroy God's gift of life! ***Ignorance separated from the life of God*** ignores 50 million abortions since 1973 Roe-v-Wade, and condemns the murder of four abortion doctors and one abortion nurse in all those years. 50 million to 5 – where is the real violence, especially when pro-lifers keep condemning all murder inside and outside abortion clinics? What loss of ***sensitivity*** demands legalizing partial birth abortion? A near birth, scissors, vacuum cleaner – need more details? How can anyone approve when 100% of the babies die and nearly all nurses and doctors who testified to Congress said it also harms the mother? We're seeing “***a continual lust for more***” in legislation written by men who demand abortion as a woman's health care right and refuse to exclude abortion from tax funded mandates. Lust for sexual immorality without consequences drives many. Genocide of minorities as inferior is documented back to the so called “Age of Enlightenment.”

So are we done here if we oppose taking human life except as God allows in capital punishment or for the life of the mother? Sadly, we are all children of our times. Society's insensitivity plagues our sinful hearts too. We easily shrink to complacency and lose our sense of mission. Self-satisfied congregations drop passion for souls into the darkness of sin and unbelief. We can get so wrapped up in our friends we may not even realize how visitors feel unwelcome by what appear to them as cliques. Do we see how new members need to feel involved in the clear mission purpose of our congregation? Coming out of Bible Information Class, they're fired up to serve the Lord. Do we neglect or even pour cold water on their ideas instead of helping steer them toward lifting high the cross? It's so easy to slip back into the **darkness**, the Lord must ***insist*** through His Apostle Paul. Christ our Life wants **A Whole New Way to Live** to keep us **Out of the darkness of ignorance** and coming daily...

† Into a bright, new you (vv.20-24)

“You, however, did not come to know Christ that way.” Literally, “You did not learn Christ that way.” Darkness and ignorance cannot reveal the true Light of the world that God gave in His one and only begotten Son. He has called us out of the selfish way of using people to seeing them all as redeemed with the blood of Christ. If only they can come to know it! Jesus calls all His disciples to proclaim the Gospel even without the gift of going door-to-door. The Lord’s Great Commission says, *“In your going,”* i.e., “wherever you go disciple all ethnic groups.” In your own quiet way share with them the one nugget you take from a sermon or Bible class. You don’t need all the arguments. As one wise Christian put it: “God has not made many of us lawyers, but He has subpoenaed all of us as witnesses.”

“Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.” People complain God either lacks the power or the love to end suffering. But the **truth** can only be found **in Jesus**. His cross is proof that cannot be argued away. ***“God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”*** (John 3:16 TPA) It takes more power than we humans have to bring a corpse to life. But God promises His power which raised Jesus from the dead will raise everyone. All believers in Jesus have everlasting life. He wants us to keep telling this Good News for everyone to be saved, not lost eternally.

“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....” This time of year you can see how **your old self** is easily **corrupted by desires** that begin and end in deceit. Sin is like a strip of fly paper. It’s not just Catholic priests, but protestant pastors and lay men and women who get caught in self-deluding sinful desires. How many legs does a fly have? One foot gets stuck in that sweet mess. He puts another over to pull out the first and now has two feet in the goo. It’s not long before both feet and your heart are into sin. Heed the Savior’s warning and strip off those old desires before sin so easily catches and corrupts us into death and hell.

But if you stop at stripping, you’re naked. And naked won’t get into heaven. That’s why the dear Holy Spirit says through Paul ***“You were taught...to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*** God clothed us first in the righteousness of Christ at our Baptism. But don’t we all have to dress every day? That’s the picture of getting up each morning and not just clothing this body, but clothing our souls in the righteousness of Christ by living for Him with proof that helps our neighbor. Daily we rise to newness of life as we recall how ***“we were...buried with [Christ] through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”*** (Romans 6:4 NIV)

That ***“new life”*** in Christ requires that we all go back to school. No professional today, including pastors, can get by without refresher courses and continuing education in your field. If you were headed into a hot battle zone, you’d want to be sure to not only have the most advanced weapons, but know how to use them and the tactics needed to fight together with your buddies in order to all come safely home to your loved ones. Can we do any less in this cosmic battle for souls? These stakes are high as eternity. Do you dare rely on what you learned many years ago in Catechism or assume that a Bible class or two can carry you safely through every attack by sin, death and the devil? God warns the forces of hell want to tear us from the skies. God’s truth produces the ***“breastplate of righteousness”*** that protects your heart and the devout piety that makes you ready to run ***“with the Gospel of peace.”*** (6:14f)

In the combat zone we all need **A Whole New Way to Live**. God has rescued you from **the darkness of ignorance**. For Jesus’ sake God forgives every selfish sin and lost opportunity in the past. Take Him at His Word and accept His command to retool, rearm and prepare to win souls for Christ. You may not notice right away, just as diet and exercise might take six weeks to see a difference. But blessed by the Lord’s skillful training, you’ll finally look in the mirror with Christ at your side and realize it’s true! God the Holy Spirit has formed a **bright, new you**. And isn’t it encouraging to know that God is pleased with His new creation? Glory be to Jesus, living as children of light! Amen.

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