

Ephesians: What's God Saying to You? What are You Going to Do About It?

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I. Introduction

Christianity is not about a religion; it's about a Person: Jesus Christ. When we study the Bible, it is He who is speaking and teaching us. And His goal is for us to know the truth about who we are and the lies that the enemy has used to deceive us. Those who have placed their faith in Him are now part of Him, clothed with His truth which opens the eyes of the blind.

II. Ephesians: What is God Saying to You and What are You Going to Do About It?

Jesus won't tell you what to do until He tells you who you are, beginning with Ephesians 4:1, Jesus starts telling us how to live: how to speak, deal with anger and forgiveness, treat our spouse, kids, parents, boss, employees, etc. But before He does this, He wants us to know who we are. Who were the Ephesians and how did they live, what did they believe?

Chapter 4

4:17-19, in the ancient world, Ephesus was a prominent, influential and religious city, second only to Rome and Athens. The temple of Artemis—or Diana, her Roman name—was there; it ranked as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. This temple was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens with columns 60' high. The cult associated with Diana influence every area of life. The people believed that Diana had power over heaven, earth, and the spirits of the underworld. The Ephesians worshipped numerous gods, but the cult of Diana was the most prominent, so prominent that it was known all over the world and Ephesus was its epicenter (Acts 19:27). When Paul first went there, the people suffered from demon possession and practiced witchcraft. But then the Lord freed them (Acts 19:11-20). About four years later, Paul wrote the letter of Ephesians; about two years after that, he wrote 1 Timothy, which concerns the many problems plaguing the Ephesians.

In Ephesians 4:17-19, the Lord is urging them not to go back to their former way of life. To do so is to walk as the rest of the Ephesians “walk, in the futility of their mind.” Why do non-Christian Ephesians have a futile mind? Because they're stuck in a vicious cycle: **spiritual blindness** → ignorance → separated from God's life/light → darkened mind → and back to **spiritual blindness**, etc., etc. All this leaves them completely dead to any sense of right and wrong, which in turn leads them to have an insatiable desire for wicked things. When we're in this state, we think we see, but the 20/20 vision we have is Satan's. Therefore, atheism makes sense. After all, how can there be a God when the world is so messed up? God describes what happens to us when we refuse to acknowledge Him in Romans 1:19-32—He steps out of the way and lets us pursue our vile passions. In this world, truth has many versions; there's “your truth” and “my truth,” even if the two contradict each other or have no basis in reality.

And the wickedness we engage in doesn't seem abnormal or wrong. It becomes second nature, like breathing air. What is wicked seems right, e.g., ashleymadison.com, a dating website for married individuals who're looking to have an affair. Their trademark: *Life is short. Have an affair.* Until God pulls us out of this world (as in the film *The Matrix*), until He renews our mind, we won't ever notice its vileness or think it's wrong. The main problem: our thinking.

In order to see wickedness for what it is, God needs to replace the lies we've learned from life, lies that have shaped our beliefs and thereby our actions. To help an addict or someone who struggles with depression, anxiety attacks, homosexuality, etc., you have to go after the real cause: the reason behind their addiction, the beliefs that led them to this path. Thus, God wants to renovate our thinking. But this is not positive thinking. Many positive thinking programs include repeating a lie to yourself: Jim Carrey once wrote himself a \$10,000,000 check for "acting services rendered." A few years later, he got \$10,000,000 for the film Dumb and Dumber. Why do such positive thinking programs work? It's not because repeating a lie to yourself eventually makes it come true; it's because of the hard work that people do in order to make the lie come true (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPU5bjzLZX0>).

4:20-21, this is how the Ephesian Christians used to live, the philosophy they believed and followed. But this is not the philosophy that they heard from Jesus, it's not how Jesus taught them. Notice how God chose to word this. He doesn't say that this is not what they learned from the Bible. Instead, He in essence says, "This is not what you learned from My Son. This is not how He taught you. These are not the words you heard from Him." This leads to an unmistakable fact: Christianity is not about Christianity; it's about a Person named Jesus Christ. We don't follow a religion; we follow the voice of one Person, Jesus. The entire Bible is about Him (Luke 24:36-47); it reveals His mind (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Christianity is not a brainwashing where you believe a bunch of lies and fairy tales told by men long ago; you don't check your brain and reasoning at the door. It's the Lord freeing you from the lies Satan told you about yourself, your life, and God. That's where the battle is: Truth vs. Lies: Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). Jesus is the father of Truth (John 14:6). At every turn, we're either following Satan's lies, or Jesus' truth (what's ashelymadison.com's truth?). Jesus can't teach you anything else but the truth because "the truth is in Jesus" (4:21).

4:22-24, why should we no longer think and live with a twisted mind? Because we have "put off" and "put on" something and our minds have been renewed. The way most Bibles word this passage is as if the putting on/off and renewing hasn't happened yet. Thus, the Lord is commanding us to do this. But these are actually past events. We have *already* put off the Old Man, put on the New Man, and had our minds renewed. There are grammatical indicators that show that these are past events, but it's also clear from the context of Ephesians: in 2:10, 15-16, it's clear that we have already put off the Old Man and put on the New Man, Christ's Body. Our old position in Satan's world, his darkness, is gone, stripped off of us by the Lord the moment we believed in Him (cf. Colossians 3:9-10). Instead, we are now clothed with Jesus, the New Man. And our minds have already been renewed, "the eyes of our understanding have been enlightened," 1:18. But there's also a sense in which this renewing will continue for the rest of our lives, i.e., the Lord will continue to free us from Satan's lies with His truth. Just as a baby learns how to grow (eat, walk, run, go to school, etc.), so the Lord wants to show us all about life and how to live it. The Old Man that continues to grow corrupt according to Satan's deceitful lusts, 4:22, is not our home anymore. We now reside in the Lord of Truth.

III. Conclusion

But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.