

## “The Renewed Walk” (Eph. 4:17-24)

Let’s review what we learned last time. God has the future picture for His Church. It shows how far believers of Jesus Christ can grow.

The first is the integration of knowledge of Jesus and faith in Him. The second is that we will mature emotionally. Children will be easily distracted by something interesting coming before their eyes. But we will be able to have firm understanding of the truth, live and think with Jesus as our foundation. We will no longer be blown here and there by every wind of teachings or other people’s voices. And for emotional children, it would be very difficult to be united. But when we mature emotionally, our unity as one body of Christ becomes mature.

The third thing is that we will attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

What does it mean practically? This is the theme of today’s message: the renewed walk, putting on Christ. Then we will naturally grow and the fullness of Jesus will fill our beings. This is God’s will for us, and he can do it for us.

### 1. The futile walk

#### 17

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.

“You must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.”

Remember. Whom is this spoken to? It is spoken to Christians in Ephesus. Why does Paul speak like this? It is because Christians can also live like the Gentiles, non-believers, people who belong to the world, not to the kingdom of God, in the futility of their thinking. It is the same now, it didn’t change since 2000 years ago.

I will share my personal story. My parents are Christians. So since I was born, or even before I was born, I was brought to church. They read stories from the bible for me at home. Gradually, I started to understand the message of the Bible. To live as a Christian, go to church, believe in Jesus, making the Bible as the standard for life. I used to think they were all really tiresome and boring. For

a long time, I thought so. Perhaps about half of my life.

I used to think if I can do all I want to do as I want without any restrictions that is the life of fulfilling and satisfying. To wear nice clothes, eat good food, drive a kind of car for which everybody would envy me, go wherever I want to go, do whatever I want to do. That must be really fulfilling! I thought.

I thought that is how I can be myself, without being hindered by anyone. And I had no doubt that I was living like that.

However, what I was doing was the manifestation of my empty heart. I realized there was an emptiness in my heart. And it was manifested, expressed in different forms. But no matter how much it is expressed, it cannot be filled. On the contrary, the more it is expressed, the more the feeling of emptiness increases.

What is the empty heart, or the futility of thinking? V. 18 and 19 continues as follows:

#### 18-19

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. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

They are separated from the life of God. And they have given themselves over to the desires of the flesh. That is the empty heart, the futility of thinking, the Bible says.

If we continue to live with the futility of thinking, we will gradually become numb, lose sensitivity. We will always need a new excitement. And we need even stronger excitement than before. It will become difficult for us to assess what we are doing and which direction we are heading. We will become confused about what will give us life, and what will destroy us. We will become increasingly numb, and lose sensitivity, not only about goodness, but also about pain. We will even not notice that we are being destroyed. Now as I look back, that was exactly what happened to me.

And that condition is basically the state of being separated from the life of God. This separation is not just a little far. This is not the kind of distance we might reach if we try very hard. This is an infinite distance, immeasurable gap. This is a complete separation.

It is like a cut flower, for example. No matter how many time you change water and care for it, it will wither sooner or later.

It is the same for us, human beings. Some people may look beautifully blossoming at that moment. Their lives may look splendid, attractive and exciting. But if they are separated from the life of God, they will wither sooner or later. When the time comes, they will decay completely. And the sad thing is that they live without realizing it, like I used to.

## 2. To know Christ

### 20-24

You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. <sup>21</sup> Surely you heard of him 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.

In the church in Ephesus, there were gentiles. They might have lived a futile way of life before. But now they were made new in Christ. So Paul is saying “Now you are no longer the same as before. So live the new life worthy of who you are now.”

The message for Jewish Christians are the same.

### Matt. 6:30-32

<sup>30</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

Jesus told this to his disciples. He says don't live like the pagans who don't know God. He said to his disciples, “Live the new life worthy of who you are now.”

And here Paul repeats the same message to Christians in Ephesus. They

may have lived a futile way of life before, but now they were made new in Christ. Now you are no longer the same as before. So live the new life worthy of who you are now.

We all know this in our head. However, the reality often doesn't match with theory. What is the problem? How can we live a life that is integrating with the truth? Is that only my question?

I noticed there is one important thing. That is: How do I know Christ?

Faith in Christ will be built by direct, personal knowing Christ through hearing his voice and experiencing him, rather than by collecting information about Christ or studying doctrine. It is the relationship where I can say, "I don't really understand the reason, but because you say so, I will trust in you and follow you, Jesus."

It is not like knowing someone by greeting sometimes, or meeting a few times. But it is knowing Christ like you know your best friend. When you know someone by spending time together, your trust in him will be strengthened through experience and you get to trust him more and more. We can know Him like this.

Come to think of it, this is an amazing thing! To have knowledge about God, that is meaningful. To read the Bible, read books about Jesus and to get knowledge about Savior, that is a valuable thing. But what we are talking here is not knowing about God, but knowing Him personally through experiences.

Isn't it amazing that we can have a personal relationship with Almighty God, Perfectly Holy Righteous Jesus, the Creator of heavens and earth and still in control of this universe? We can spend time with our Savior, like we have coffee with our best friend. Isn't it amazing?

Then what is the problem? How do we know God?

Let me share how I used to think who God is. God created heaven and earth. And he created human beings. But they didn't follow God's rule, so they were sent away from the garden of Eden. And I was told that God would judge me too. For me, God was frightening, terrifying, super strict, cold-blooded, unapproachable. Needless to search, there is sin in my life. No one need to point out sins in my life, I am very well aware of the fact.

Then I heard the message of salvation through the cross. “Just believe it, you will be forgiven.” What I understood is salvation is the way of escape from dreadful punishment of God. In my head, God is still terrifying. He is still unapproachable. Who want to spend time with someone who is terrifying? I wanted to keep distance from God as much as I could.

Paul says to Christians in Ephesus, and to other Christians, and to me, and to you. “Did God really appear that way? How did he come to you actually?”

#### Eph. 2:4-5; 8

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. ... <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

God who was terrifying Judge in the Old Testament. Did he suddenly change in the New Testament? No, it cannot be. God doesn't change, He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

#### Jer. 31:3

The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.

God is love yesterday, today and forever (1 Jh. 4:16). Then we cannot know God without being loved by Him.

Nowadays, when we hear of “love”, we think of some romantic, sentimental or exciting thing. But most of the time, those kind of “love” are just superficial on the surface level. I have no intention to totally deny them, but God's love is much deeper.

There is also an opposite extreme. Some people try to understand God's love intellectually. They will analyze it, explain it and consider they understand it. No matter how much accurate information you gather about a person, if you don't spend time with him, you cannot experience his love. What you can only do is you just imagine his love.

If we want to know love, there is no other way but spending time with the person. It is not until we experience his love that we know God. The more we

spend time with God, the more we experience how wide and long and high and deep his love is. When we are loved, and loved and loved, and then we come to know that we can trust Him.

### 3. Putting on Christ

#### 22-24

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.

“To put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.”

My old self. The way of thinking and the way of life which I learned before I come to know Jesus. Paul expresses them as if they were clothes on us. He says “Take it off.” But he didn’t say, “Take it off, and put on whatever you like.” He says “Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

In the first place, human was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27).

God created the heavens and earth and everything in them out of nothing. He made everything by His Word, one by one. For example, when he said, “Let there be light” and there was light. According to Genesis cp.1, God created light, sky, land, seas and plants between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> day. And He saw what He has created were good. On the 5<sup>th</sup> day, He created creatures of the sea and rivers, and birds of the sky. On the 6<sup>th</sup> day, He created all the creatures on the land. And God saw that they were good.

Then God created man. God created man in his own image. And it was only man that God created by his own hands. And he breathed life into man, and the man became a living being. And after he created man, God saw all that he had made, and he said it was very good (Gen. 1:31). It was not just good, but it was “very good.”

It’s like parents who prepare everything for their coming baby. They think very carefully what their baby needs and set up all things before the baby is born. It shows how much they love their baby even before the baby is born. The

creation story tells not only how much God loves us, but also how much he is pleased by us.

Humans were made in the image of God. And Adam and Eve were placed in the world as partners of God's works of creation. They lived in God's love and blessings, they love one another, and were blessings to one another. It was very good.

However, man chose to live their own way. It cost them separation from God, who is the creator of life, the source of life. Because of that, man started to live empty lives. Man started to complain about one another, rob one another, envy one another, and hate and kill one another. Men destroy nature, and fight for taking lands, resources and products. It's still the same.

And as we were separated from God, we lost our identity, lost sight of who we are. If we are separated from God, how can we know what the image of God is like? There is no way we can know it.

David Benner said "Receiving the gift of love reminds us all of what it is to be fully human."<sup>1</sup> In other words, when we are separated from God who is the true love, we become less human. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

This is totally different from the original design. It is not only not functioning well, but also causing harm.

But God didn't say, "Ok then, it can't be helped. Let them perish." Instead, he says, "Come to me. I will make you new. I will give you a new heart. I will put a new spirit in you. (2 Cor. 5:17; Ezek. 11:19)"

God didn't say, "When you are renewed and become well, you can come back to me." No. It's opposite. If we come back to God, we will be renewed. God will restore the beauty and dignity of who we are as the person God originally intended us to be.

God accepts us as we are. And because God loves us so much that he won't leave us as we are. We were made in the image of God, but that image is lost. God can never leave us in that state.

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<sup>1</sup> David Benner, *Surrender to Love*, IVP, 2003, p.13

When we desire to take off our old self, God will take it away. Not only that, but He will give us his new garment. He wants us to clothe in Christ (Gal. 3:27). Instead of mourning, He will give us gladness and honor. Instead of a spirit of despair, he will clothe us with a garment of praise (Is. 61:3).

Every morning is the new opportunity to put on new clothe of Christ. We can choose to wear a brand-new clothe of Christ moment by moment. That's our renewed walk.

When I envy someone, I'm wearing the old clothe. When I am in the new clothe, I can pray for others and rejoice for others. When I complain about what others are doing and what others are not doing, I'm in the old clothe. When I blame someone and pity myself, I'm wearing the old clothe. When I'm judgmental about others, I'm in the old clothe. When I choose the new clothe, I can deny myself and serve others who are suffering for their brokenness. When I wear the old clothe, it's very difficult to hold back from speaking what I want to say and listen to others. When I'm in the new clothe, I can happily stop what I'm doing and listen to my wife, and I can joyfully help her. When I'm in the new clothe, I can understand how real God's love is in me.

God wants us to know how much we are loved by Him through experiences, not just in our head. He loves our whole being. We may have been hurt in shame, weakness and sin. When we bring these before the Lord, we will experience that he loves us, he loves me even with all these wounds in shame, weakness and sin. And when we keep remaining in His love, these wounds will be healed by His love, and shame, weakness and sin will melt away in His love. Instead, Christ will start working inside of us. And we will come to know Him more and more tangibly, in a real way. And through us wearing the new clothe, someone will experience his love. "Experiencing the Life, Changing Lives."

For LifeNet groups and personal reflection:

1) What kind of images do you have about God? List them up, and think how those images were made, what influenced you to have those images. And, how does those images of God affect your current relationship with God?

2) Look back last one week, was there any moment you were in the old clothe?

Can you remember your feelings and thoughts at that time?

3) Think about something that reminds you to wear the new clothe. (For example, to put a picture card on the desk, to set alarm three times in your working hour to pause what you're doing and to read one verse of Psalm, etc.) And share your plan with someone and ask the person to pray for you. See how it helps you this week.