



## THE NEW KINGDOM MINDSET

By Margretha Esprey  
Christian Centre Abbotsford

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We have been learning such exciting things these last few weeks. The most amazing love of God has been emphasised. God has called us, chosen us; He loves us and Father wants us to look like and be like Jesus, His eldest Son. **Isn't it exciting** that we are called to be new people, people like Jesus!

**There was a period in education when the buzz word was "outcomes-based". After** a few years something else became the big **"in-thing"**. **There were reasons for** pushing it aside, but when handled correctly, the idea of outcomes-based is excellent. Unless something leads to a good result, **it isn't worth the time spent on it**, there must be a good outcome.

All our Christian teaching and preaching is useless unless there is a good outcome!

Scripture Ref.: Ephesians 4:17–24 (ESV)

*<sup>17</sup> Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. <sup>19</sup> They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.*

*<sup>20</sup> But that is not the way you learned Christ – <sup>21</sup> assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus, <sup>22</sup> to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

The beginning of our reading today starts with the words, **"Now this I say"**, or **"therefore"** as we read it in the NKJV. They both mean that something must follow. In light of what Paul has already said about **God's love**, God choosing them, saving them, raising them up, seating them in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, making known the mystery of God and being made part of the body of Christ, to name just a few of the glorious teachings, something must now follow. There must be an outcome, otherwise the teaching of the first three chapters has not been successful.

The Ephesian church to whom the letter was written, was a group of people who were Gentiles in the flesh; they had come to Jesus Christ and were now members of the Christian church in Ephesus. They must have been stirred by the Spirit of God, otherwise they would not have accepted the Gospel message. Now Paul emphasises that Christianity **is a "walk"**. It is not something that you just know in your mind and heart, not just something that you listen to and think about. It must be something that affects your daily life, the way you think, speak and do. Your attitude must be a testimony, telling the world about the wonderful Jesus who is your Saviour and Friend. There had been a time when these people had been identified with the other unbelieving Gentiles, not only physically, but also spiritually, but now they were the people of God, a royal priesthood.

## OLD LIFE:

What was so very wrong with their previous walk?

In verses 18 and 19 we find a list of the problems which had marked their lives before. Their understanding had been darkened, their minds had been shut against God and because they had no understanding, it meant that they were ignorant and this ignorance led to the alienation, or separation from God, and Paul clearly indicated that all of this was due to the hardness of their hearts. This hardness was probably the deepest problem, the main cause. Because of the hardness they had become callous, so callous that they did not feel anything. The fruit that came from their callous hearts was sensuality that led to a practice of all uncleanness. **They didn't feel anything when they** used and abused others; they could not care how others felt, how much they had hurt them. All the rape, murder, even sharp business practice – all things that we see and hear so much of in South Africa - are examples of this same callousness. It is greed, whether it is satisfying the desires of the body or the wallet, these people do not care how much others are hurt.

The Ephesians had been dead to God - it was very much a case of being alive to their bodies and its desires. Ephesus was a heathen city where prostitution was a way of life; it was part of the temple activities in their famous temple of Diana. Many sinful activities, especially of a sexual nature, were rife. There were no desires after God. They served the creature rather than the Creator; they were just interested in giving their bodies what they desired. God was totally out of the picture

## A TOTAL CHANGE WAS NEEDED:

A total change of mind, attitude and actions was needed. Paul says in verse 20 that that was not the way they had been taught about Jesus. A Christian is someone who has experienced a radical change in his life. These believers had been Gentiles in the spirit, they had been in darkness, dead in trespasses and sin. They had been Gentiles, not only in the flesh, but also in the spirit, living to fulfil the desires of the flesh. BUT GOD, because of His kindness and grace, had made them alive together with Christ, they had been crucified with Christ, were raised up with Him and were now sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus! They were now children of light. God had declared them righteous in His sight, all because of Jesus. Paul was telling them that now they could be filled with the immense love of Christ and the very fullness of God was available to them.

## THIS CHANGE HAD TO BE SEEN IN THEIR LIVES:

What about us here at Christian Centre? The past for many of us may not have been mostly noted by sensuality and the using and abusing of others, but whatever your and my pasts were, a radical change after salvation, is always essential - for the Ephesians and for us. For us too, all the grace of God must lead to a change in our manner of walk. Everything that Paul said to the Ephesians in this portion of Scripture, equally applies to us. So, **let's focus on our lives now**. Even though our spirits become renewed immediately when we become children of God, the outside change does not happen automatically. That is why Paul calls everyone to holiness and godliness. It is essential that we put into practice what we have learnt. In 4:1 we saw that Paul had said that we should walk worthy of the calling with which we have been called.

Verse 21 (TPT) is worth reading. Listen to this. ***"If you have really experienced the Anointed One, and heard His truth, it will be seen in your life."*** We can therefore say that if nothing of

Jesus is seen in your life, there is a question mark concerning whether you have actually met Jesus. It must be possible for others to recognize you as a child of God by the way you live. Romans 15 (TPT) starts by saying, *“Now, those who are mature in their faith can easily be recognized **for they don’t live to please themselves.**”*

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO GET TO KNOW JESUS AND HIS GLORY, AND TO BELIEVE IN HIM, AND FOR IT TO HAVE NO EFFECT ON YOUR LIFE.

NB. Do you understand what happened to you when you became a believer and do you know who you are in Christ?

All your sin was washed away, so totally, no one could get cleaner than that. You were made a new person, recreated in Christ, your spirit made alive. You were given a new identity, the Father calls you, **“My child”**. The old self was crucified with Christ. It is dead!

Romans 6:6 ESV *“We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of **sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.**”*

The old self died. A dead person cannot be half alive and before coming to Christ you were spiritually dead – totally dead. You are no longer that person. We read there that the body of sin was brought to nothing and you are no longer enslaved to sin! It is not impossible for you to sin again, but you are no longer controlled by sin. As I have heard it said, you are no longer a professional sinner! You have been reconciled to the Father; you have access to Him. You have been justified, just as if you have never sinned – a totally new person with a clean slate. You have been re-created, born again, you are now called a saint! Everything on the inside became new.

All of this happens the moment you become a child of God. All of this is done for you by God.

This means that you are now a new person, totally forgiven and you have a new slate. God loves you just as much as He loves His firstborn Son, Jesus. Glorious blessings and gifts now **come to you as to every child of God**. Don’t any longer think of yourself as a rotten sinner, always recalling the bad things you have done and be consumed with regret. This does not honour God. Rather embrace your forgiveness and newness. You have been totally cleansed and if you walk with the Lord, the Holy Spirit will let you know if and when you do wrong and you can immediately repent, confess and receive forgiveness. When God forgives, He forgets and the wrong act no longer exists. Christ has brought you into the very presence of the Father and you are standing there before Him with nothing left against you. He presents you holy and blameless and above reproach\_– nothing left that He may even chide you for. The Father says you are righteous in My sight because of Jesus.

NOW THERE IS SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

This is something that will not automatically happen. The old self, or old man as some translations call him, must be taken off. Now you may say, but we read just now that the old self was crucified, yes, he was, but that was on the inside of you. God renewed your spirit in His likeness. Now you must let it infiltrate and totally take over control of your soul, which is your feelings, your thoughts and your emotions. This will then lead to your actions displaying Him. Remember that Jesus came to show the world who the Father was and now we need to carry on with this and show the world our precious Lord and Saviour. It is up to you to change the old attitudes and all the old ways. This re-created person must surely have a different lifestyle, one that fits who you are now. You have no obligations to your old sinful nature to

do what it begs you to do. It is now time to put what you have learnt and believe into practical living.

Living the new lifestyle is not even difficult now, because when you love someone, you want to respond to that one and do what pleases him or her. In the same way you desire to please Jesus who loves you so much. Jesus said, **"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him and We will come to him and make Our home with him."** He also said that the Helper, the Holy Spirit will come and teach you and remind you of the things that Jesus said. And He will remain with you forever. So, remember that whenever you feel that you are not coping and you need help, the Holy Spirit is there to help, support and guide you. I can assure you with total confidence that your old 'you' will most certainly not feel comfortable in this new person!

For some this change takes a bit of time and happens gradually, but happen, it must!

Verse 23 says, **"And to be renewed in the spirit of your minds."**

TPT says, **"Now it is time to be made new by every revelation that's been given to you."**

Romans 12:2 ESV *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind..."*

Your mind is part of your soul and to renew it, you take out the old way of thinking and replace it with a new way of thinking. This leads to transformation. **If you don't, you will not** enjoy the blessings God has in store for you. This renewing is an ongoing process. It begins at salvation and continues throughout the Christian's life. Your **conversion was not God's** ultimate intent for you. It was the initial intent, but there is more to come now.

How do you renew the spirit of your mind?

Keep in mind that when God renewed your spirit and you were born again, you received the character of God. It was implanted in you. You were born into His family, which means that you have His DNA. Negative and destructive thoughts are not part of His character! They must be replaced by positive, life-giving knowledge of the Word. Therefore, saturate your mind with the Word. When you do that, you discover such wonderful things –e.g. 1Cor. 2:16 says, **"We have the mind of Christ."** **Give His mind free run of your life, don't lock it away;** let His mind guide your thinking!

Let's consider how to get ourselves saturated with the Word:

Spend time in the Word and continually submit your life to the Word of God. Quiet your mind, read the Word slowly and meditate on it. Repeat it over and over, if necessary, until you understand and know it well enough to remember it. Then you ponder on it by talking to yourself about it, recall it often throughout the day. This will cause your subconscious to absorb it and it will remain with you and when you are under pressure, ugly, embarrassing **words won't come out of your** mouth. If you dunk a sponge into muddy water and you squeeze it, muddy water will come forth, but fill it with clean water and pressure is exerted – clean water will come out.

What you meditate on is going to determine the way you view things and this is important so that you will not be deceived and blinded by the devil, to see things as he wants you to see. Example: Of the twelve spies who looked at Canaan, only two saw the fertility of the soil, the fruit and all the possibilities. The other ten only saw problems and the size of the dangers. Their eyes were on their own capability. They were not meditating on the greatness of God.

When you meditate on the Word, your mind, your whole being, gets saturated and you start seeing things the way God sees them, you see with His eyes. What your inner being is full of, spills over into actions. The way you think affects the way you feel in your heart and this affects the way you act and this of course means that your behaviour is changed.

The old way of thinking and feeling, old attitudes, old priorities, old idols are not worth what the value of Jesus is to you. He came to give abundant life! So, exchange what you were, for all He calls you to be! Do not ever give in to temptation to behave in the old way.

Verse 24: *Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Verse 24 (TPT) says, **“And to be transformed as you embrace the glorious Christ-within as your new life and live in union with Him!”** For God has re-created you all over again in His perfect righteousness, and you now belong to Him in the realm of true holiness.

You are a new person, so be that new person; put this newness into practice. A desire for the things of God is now in you and God pours His love into you – all because you are now His. This new self is a temple of God, His dwelling place (1 Corinthians 3:16). God desires that you now be filled with His fullness! **Doesn't this excite you? What amazing, glorious plans He has for you – and He makes it all possible.**

Do you remember that Jacob had a dream where he saw a ladder going from the earth to heaven and he saw angels ascending and descending? In the morning he said, *“How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God and this the gate of heaven.”* There is an open heaven above you, and it is possible for angels to descend and ascend, so that they may **assist you in fulfilling God's plans for your life.** Oh, my friends, let us abide in Christ so that we may grow in Him and enjoy all the great glory that there is for us.

### **NONE OF THIS IS YOURS TO ENJOY UNLESS YOU'VE BEEN TO THE CROSS AND PUT YOUR TRUST IN JESUS.**

What we have been learning is so exciting and it is so wonderful that we are so loved, chosen and cared for and provided with what we need, so that we may grow in Christ and experience His fullness, but we cannot put off the old and put on the new, unless we have been to the cross of Jesus. Here the old dies. Have you put your trust in Jesus, put your faith in Him and made Jesus Lord of your life? It is absolutely essential that you answer this question. The Father said that He wants many sons and daughters, to join Jesus as His children. He desires to have YOU as one of His children!

Child of God, be a witness for Jesus, share His love with others, live the life of love. You might be the only Bible read by some!

Has the spirit of your mind been **changed so that you see with God's eyes?**

Is your inner being so full of God that His actions and words are spilling from your heart that you will respond to problems the way He does?

Have you learnt how to meditate and chew on the Word, or are you still battling with that?

**Today is the day that all of that can change. Don't let today go past without sorting out these issues.**

Discussion questions:

1. Have you made Jesus Lord of your life?
2. Have you put off the old man and put on the new?
3. How has your life changed? Share something about your new relationship and how you experience it. Do you still find it difficult not to sin?