

## INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Ephesians 4:17-24**.
- B. *The very essence of spiritual warfare is lies versus truth.* Satan and his angels go all out to get you to love their lies more than you love the truth of God. Since they can't *make* you do that, or make you do anything else for that matter, they try to find some way to delude you. They wage war to confuse your mind and capture your heart.
- C. This lesson looks at;
  - 1. 5 steps to spiritual destruction (Satan's master strategy).
  - 2. 5 steps to spiritual success.

## I. SATAN'S MASTER STRATEGY (Eph. 4:17-19).

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, **18** being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; **19** and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

- A. **Darkening of the understanding** (4:18a).

Paul uses the word *darkened* to describe what happens to the understanding. *Understanding* refers to intellectual reasoning. Satan's goal is to confuse the understanding and fog the reasoning. He uses darkness to distort the truth (Rom. 1:19-22).

*because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools,...*
- B. **Hardening of the heart** (4:18d).

Confused thinking leads to an inability to reason (or discern) correctly, and that leads to enslavement to our twisted emotions. Emotions are like that: they take you captive and lead you to abandon logic so you can have what you want at the moment. The word *hardened* in the text refers to the process of becoming petrified. What was once alive has, over time, become hard as a rock.
- C. **Loss of Sensitivity** (4:19a).

That's what sin does for you. Accept it into your life, and it will eventually take control.
- D. **Immersion in sensuality** (4:19b).

Paul called it an indulgence in every kind of immorality with a continual lust for more. The petrified heart is insatiable, craving more sin, more often, with more selfishness. Always needing more, the sinner must find new sins that are stronger and more demanding. Satan does care how low he takes you.
- E. **Spiritual destruction** (4:19c).

Not only are alcohol and drugs addictive; all sin is addictive. That same self-destructive behavior exists in all who allow the devil to deceive them to the point of having petrified hearts--no matter which route of temptation and sin they take. The end is spiritual destruction.

## II. BUT...

- A. I love Eph. 4:20.

*But you did not learn Christ in this way,*
- B. When one comes to X and learns of His way, things change. A Xian is not supposed to behave in this way. Things are to be different.

## III. GOD'S REDEMPITIVE STRATEGY (Eph. 4:20-24).

But you did not learn Christ in this way, **21** if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, **22** that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, **23** and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, **24** and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

A. **Hear the Word** (4:21a).

True, saving faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). This is opening up the understanding, not the darkening of it. It is the opposite of destruction's first step (Col. 3:16).

*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

B. **Be taught by the Word** (4:21b).

To be in constant contact with God's word so that He can instruct us daily. This is the softening of the heart, not the hardening of it. It is the opposite of destruction's second step (Heb. 5:11-14).

*Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.*

C. **Lay aside the old self** (4:22).

This is genuine repentance; a complete turning around of mind, heart, and life. It means denial of self and crucifixion of the will (Gal. 2:20). This is the gaining of sensitivity of the heart and soul not the loss of them. This is the opposite of destruction's third step.

*"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."*

D. **Be renewed in the spirit of your mind** (4:23).

A whole new attitude and direction. Thoughts preceded actions. Getting the thought process right will be the actions that follow will be right. Focus on good and proper things (Phil. 4:8). This is being flooded with spirituality not sensuality. This is the opposite of destruction's fourth step.

*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.*

E. **Put on the new self** (4:24).

Put on X, specifically in baptism (Gal. 3:27). Wear Him as your joy and crown. Be clothed in His grace, goodness, and forgiveness. Allow Him to show you the way. This is spiritual redemption not spiritual destruction. This is the opposite of destruction's fifth step.

*For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

## CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. Two mutually exclusive paths. We must choose which one we shall take, for they have opposite rewards.
- B. X's invitation always stands.
- C. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring-Xians.