

Doctrine of Human Behavior and Consequence

Lesson 9 – Behavior in the Epistles

Ephesians 4:1 – Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.

INTRODUCTION

In our last lesson, we saw the Lord Jesus live out perfect human behavior as the Word who became flesh. He showed us what full alignment with the Father looks like in every choice, every trial, and every relationship. Now the apostles, and Paul above all, turn to the churches and say, “You are in Him. Therefore, live in a way that matches who you are.” The focus moves from the perfect example outside us to the new position we have been given inside Him. Paul writes this way on purpose. Every letter follows the same pattern: first he sets out the great truths of what God has done for us and who we now are, then he gives the commands that flow from those truths. This is no accident. The authorial intent is clear. Behavior does not create identity. Identity supplies the reason and the means for behavior.

The churches Paul addressed were in cities soaked in idolatry, sexual immorality, greed, and selfish ambition. Most of the believers had come out of those very patterns. Paul does not scold them into trying harder. He reminds them of their calling, their position, and then tells them to choose daily conduct that corresponds to it. The Greek word for *walk*, περιπατέω (peripateō), describes the entire direction and pattern of life. *Worthy*, ἄξιος (axios), means matching in weight or value. The life we live should weigh the same as the dignity of the calling we have received.

The Believer’s Position in Christ

Paul anchors every command in what is already true of us the moment we believe the gospel. In Romans 6:6, he writes, “...knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.” The *old self*, παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον (palaion anthrōpon), is the person we were in Adam. It has been judicially dealt with at the cross. In Romans 6:11, he says, “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” The verb λογίζομαι (logizomai) means to count as true because God declares it so. We are to live in light of this fact.

In Ephesians 2:6, we are told that God “raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Positionally, we are already there. In Colossians 3:1-3, Paul adds, “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” The old way of life is still present in the flesh, yet our true life is secure with Christ. Galatians 2:20 states, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but

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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 gave Himself up for me.” Our identity in Christ now gives us the opportunity to please God and live for Him, but the choice to walk by faith remains ours.

Ephesians 2:10 tells us, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” Notice the purpose. We were created in Christ for these works, and the works have already been prepared. The verse does not say the works will happen automatically. It says we are to walk in them. The instruction is clear, the opportunity is provided, and the responsibility to choose to live in alignment with our identity is ours.

What Believers Are Commanded to Do

Paul gives both broad directions and specific examples. We are to *put on the new self*, *καινὸν ἄνθρωπον* (kainon anthrōpon) in Ephesians 4:24 or *νέον ἄνθρωπον* (neon anthrōpon) in Colossians 3:10, which has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Colossians 3:12-14 spells out what that looks like: “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”

We are to speak truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), work heartily as for the Lord (Colossians 3:23), serve one another through love (Galatians 5:13), pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and live in a way that adorns the doctrine of God our Savior (Titus 2:10). Everything that we are told to do represents a character trait of Jesus, and since we are in Him, it is the means to be Christ-like, not only in what we believe, but how we think and what we do.

What Believers Are Commanded to Avoid

At the same time, Paul tells us to *lay aside the old self*, *παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον* (palaion anthrōpon), with its practices. Ephesians 4:25-32 lists falsehood, sinful anger that lingers, stealing, unwholesome words, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice. Galatians 5:19-21 catalogs the works of the flesh: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.

Paul draws a sharp line between two realms. In Galatians 5:21, he says, “...the ones who do such things” (οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες) will not inherit the kingdom of God. The articular

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present participle simply labels the group whose lives match their unbelieving identity. They are *unrighteous* (ἄδικοι, adikoi) because they have not believed. Because they are only *natural* (ψυχικοί, psuchikoi) and not spiritual, their conduct can only be works of the flesh. The action does not create or prove the identity; the identity of unbelief is represented in these actions.

You, however, are sons through faith. Your identity is fixed in Christ. Therefore, do not live as though you still belong to the other realm. That realm has no inheritance in the kingdom. You belong to a different realm. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Paul lists the same kinds of sins and says the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom, then immediately adds, “And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” In Ephesians 5:8, he writes, “...for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light.” The warning is “you are sons; stop participating in the deeds of darkness because that contradicts who you are.”

In 1 Corinthians 6:18, the command is simple: “Flee immorality.” The Greek φεύγω (pheugō) pictures decisive, immediate flight. In Colossians 3:5, we are told to “consider the members of your earthly body as dead to” such sins. The flesh remains strong if we do not feed our spirit and will pull us back if we let it. That is why the commands come as choices we must make daily.

The Motivation for Obedience

Paul never motivates by threatening loss of eternal life. He motivates with the realities of who we are and what Christ has done. In 2 Corinthians 5:14, he writes, “For the love of Christ controls us.” The verb συνέχω (sunechō) means to press in on every side, to hold us together and urge us forward. But if you do not learn about the love of Christ, (focus on, dwell on, constantly stir up our minds and actively recall His love) how can the love of Christ compel. This is where we reiterate the importance having our motivation being gratitude for grace, not dread of law.

Philippians 2:13 – “...for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” How does God work in you? Most people consider this a supernatural or mystical activity from the Holy Spirit. But in the context of Philippians 2, we find out that it is the Word of God that helps a believer understand and be properly motivated to work to please God. We do not have to live in ambiguity or have some type of self-willed motivation. Our thoughts need to be guided by the Word of God; the reason we do good works needs to be properly motivated by God’s grace. And yet the flesh is still right there, pulling hard in the opposite direction. That is why Paul can give us this clear command in Romans 6:13: “...and

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do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.” The Greek word for *presenting*, *παριστάνω* (*paristanō*), means we make a definite, daily decision with our will. Two paths stay open before us every single day: the way of the flesh or the way of the renewed mind and spirit. The more we let the truth of Scripture dwell in us and renew our minds (Romans 12:2), the better our motivation will be to walk the path that honors our Lord.

Future hope also stirs us. When Christ appears, we will appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4). The prospect of standing before Him and hearing “well done” and receiving the crown of righteousness helps us have a proper perspective with our daily decisions.

Consequences in the Epistles

Because we are under grace, consequences for believers are never eternal wrath. They are typically in the realm of the evaluation of our works for reward. At the judgment seat of Christ described in 2 Corinthians 5:10 and 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, every believer’s works will be tested by fire. What remains brings reward. What burns indicates lost opportunity for reward. Paul writes these warnings to stir diligence, not to produce fear.

Natural consequences also operate inside the body of Christ. Division weakens testimony. Laziness in work harms reputation. Unforgiveness poisons fellowship. Those who live in overt rebellion to God or are promoting false teaching are to be dismissed from the fellowship. The individual consequences (division, lack of trust, criminal prosecution, societal ostracization) teach us the same lessons the wisdom literature taught Israel; only now, they occur inside the secure family of God.

Timeless Principles

Several truths stand out across Paul’s letters and apply directly to us today.

First, our position in Christ is the starting point for every command. We obey because of who we are, not in order to become something we are not.

Second, two realities live side by side in every believer: the old self that was crucified positionally and the flesh that still pulls toward sin, and the new self, created in righteousness that we must deliberately put on. Volition remains central. The truth of God can reshape our thinking and desires, yet the flesh remains strong enough that we must choose daily.

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Third, the same grace that declared us righteous now teaches us to deny ungodliness and live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age (Titus 2:11-12).

Fourth, consequences remain instructive. They train us, warn us, and shape us for greater usefulness both now and in light of eternity.

Conclusion

The Epistles show the church how to live out the life the Lord Jesus modeled. We have been placed in Him. Our old self has been dealt with at the cross. Christ now lives in us by His Spirit. Our daily task is to choose, by renewed minds and willing hearts, to walk in a manner worthy of that calling, putting off the old patterns, putting on the new, motivated by His love, empowered by His Spirit, and looking to the day we will stand before Him. In this way, we display to a watching world what human behavior looks like when it is lived in light of the identity God has given us in His Son.

THE WORTHY WALK: IDENTITY-DRIVEN BEHAVIOR IN CHRIST

POSITIONAL TRUTH: WHO YOU ARE NOW



CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST
Romans 6:6 states the "Old Self" (the person we were in Adam) was judicially dealt with at the cross to break the slavery of sin.



THE "LOGIZOMAI" RECKONING

Believers are commanded to "consider" (count as true because God said so) themselves dead to sin but alive to God.



SEATED IN HEAVENLY PLACES

According to Ephesians 2:6, the believer is positionally already seated with Christ, even while living in the flesh on earth.



MOTIVATION & CONSEQUENCES



DRIVEN BY LOVE, NOT LAW

2 Corinthians 5:14 states the "Love of Christ controls us," acting as a pressure that urges the believer forward out of gratitude.



THE JUDGMENT SEAT (BEMA)

Consequences for believers are not eternal wrath, but the evaluation of works for rewards; what is not of Christ "burns" as lost opportunity.

THE DAILY CHOICE: PUT OFF VS. PUT ON



LAY ASIDE THE OLD SELF

Believers are commanded to "Ree" and "lay aside" practices like falsehood, bitterness, theft, and the "works of the flesh" (immorality, idolatry, and strife).



PUT ON THE NEW SELF

This involves actively choosing character traits of Jesus: compassion, kindness, humility, goodness, patience, and love.



PREPARED GOOD WORKS

Ephesians 2:10 notes that believers are "God's workmanship," created for works that God prepared beforehand for us to walk in.

NATURAL CONSEQUENCES



Paul warns that sinful behavior inside the church leads to division, poisoned fellowship, and a weakened testimony to the world.

THE FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE

IDENTITY PRECEDES BEHAVIOR



Paul's letters always establish the "Indicative" (what God has done/who you are) before the "Imperative" (commands on how to live).

THE MEANING OF "WORTHY" (AXIOS)



From Ephesians 4:1, the Greek "axios" means "matching in weight"—our daily conduct should weigh so much as the dignity of our calling.

THE "WALK" (PERIPATEO)



This term describes the entire direction and pattern of a person's life, not just isolated incidents.