

Ephesians IX

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Paul addresses how the Lord trains each individual from verse 17 to 32 and all the way to 5:20. We can see about 4 things beginning with verse 17. First, Paul speaks “This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind.” He is saying not to walk in the futility of your mind. In another word, do not live by the ways of secular people live in the world. There are several characteristics of saints who were filled with the Holy Spirit and of the churches seized by the Spirit in church history.

First, a strong sense of responsibility for souls arose. They had the passion for the lost souls. They were very much interested in other souls. Second, they were decisive with regard to the world. They were not under the influence of the world and they didn't compromise with them. In the exposition of Galatians we see two heresies: exclusivism & syncretism. Exclusivism is legalism. Syncretism means that a church is already under the worldly influence. In the pulpit of Korean churches both of them exist today. What is legalism? Those that are so diligent in their Christian walk are bound up that they don't have any freedom. Consequently, personality destruction takes place. Let's look at syncretism. A church is under all kinds of influence from the world like moral corruption, ethical corruption, and unspeakable adulteries. They are too numerous in today's churches. There is nothing new under the sun. Churches are repeating the history of compromise.

Once a church is seized by the Holy Spirit of God, she never approves the world. She no longer allows the influence of the world to affect her. It leads to removing TVs from the homes of believers. A church decisively shuts down the worldly influence. That's why we say, “Do not live like secular people!” However I am not saying to live completely apart from the world. We should work on our spirituality and train our folks so that believers are not under the influence of the world. I want to introduce spiritual filtering system. Osmosis is the movement of water from a low solute concentration to a high solute concentration. The high concentration of God sucks in the things of the world and turns them into things of God. However, your concentration of God is low where you rather flow out to the world which in turn fills you up. This is the reason why believers must train to cut off the worldly influence.

The word “futility” comes from the background of idolatry. If we live like Gentiles, we are supposed to become futile. According to the prophecy of Habakkuk the world is inheritance that will be burned down to nothing. It seems fun when you first drop down the anchor but your life will be vain more and more. We see the futile life in verses 18 and 19. In verse 18 Paul says that their understanding will be darkened. Ephesian Church's focus is on all wisdom, understanding, and the spirit of revelation. We have looked at it in chapter 1. What are they going to do with wisdom, understanding and the spirit of revelation? In one word, it is to know God. God created the whole universe with His word. If we know God, we know all. The fear of the Lord is beginning of wisdom. Likewise as much as know God we can know the world and how He reigns in the universe. I won't tell you to study and give your effort to learn but I will say that fundamentally everything opens up through His revelation and as much as you know Him.

Instead of interpreting the Scripture according to commentaries but fundamentally Scripture should be interpreted by the Holy Spirit. This is the secret to receive life. Pastors, once the main text is decided and you prepare sermons through the commentaries every time instead of receiving the revelation from God. Your spirit won't mature and life won't come out of your mouth. Fundamentally, we should hear the voice of God when it comes to Scripture interpretation.

Wisdom and understanding will become darkened if we don't live in the presence of God. Through wisdom and understanding we should acknowledge His love and character and discern what He likes, what He dislikes, what makes Him angry, and what pleases Him. We should

acknowledge them through the Holy Spirit. In short, if we live in futility, first thing that goes is the wisdom and understanding. When our concern is over the world, our wisdom of God and understanding are closed off. One who used to know the will of God and obey accordingly may all of sudden experience darkness today. The reason for that is his soul was in the light and turned his eyes toward the darkness. The world is the darkness, isn't it? Once we turn our eyes to the world we experience the wisdom and understanding immediately closing off. When our relationship deepens with God, our souls will respond to the world with even more sensitivity. Let's cut off the secular influence!

Next, we should be holy! Holiness, in simple way, means responding to the word of God immediately. When God says, "I love you," we respond immediately with joy. When God says, "I dislike that," then we should immediately drop it. If God speaks to us "rejoice" when we are in sorrow, we should immediately rejoice. We need a quick spiritual reflex.

Second, we have ignorance. When understanding is in darkness, we lose the ability to discern what is right and wrong. We become ignorant of what is clean or dirty, what makes God angry or happy, whether to go left or right, when God's time is or not, and the place & people God desires or not. When our souls are out in the world, our wisdom and understanding are darkened and we become immediately ignorant. We lose the ability to discern God. It is a matter of how sensitive we are. As soon as you turn your attention to the world, you will be darkened regardless of how wisely you have been choosing God previously.

Paul in Romans 8:13 states, "For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die." It is a matter of where your thought is. If you are thinking of God, the desire of the Spirit will open up which in turn prospers new man. However, if your focus is on the world, your thoughts will open up the desire of flesh which in turn opens up the functions to prosper the old man in you.

After the ignorance comes the hardening of heart. Once you start focusing on the world your wisdom and understanding will be darkened, you will become ignorant and hardened. It is not an overstatement to say that at this point the Holy Spirit in you is almost suffocating to death. In the parable of sower the only field that yields any produce is the good soil. Unless we become a good soil we cannot bear fruits. What is a good soil? It is a field that is cultivated with the word of God every day. One scoop by an excavator won't make it a good soil. The beside-road is like a soil of your spirit that has become so hard like after a roller went over so it many times. There is no opening for a seed to penetrate. Your spirit is hardened by the philosophy of the world and the reason of the world. A seed takes a root in the rocky soil but it doesn't go deep. You stumble and fall immediately by suffering and hardship. The thorny soil also receives a seed which takes a root; however, the problem is that it also receives other seeds which suffocate the grain. Greed and temptation represent the thorny soil. In short, there is no soil that can yield produce. Only soil that is important to us is the good soil!

What is the good soil in Luke? It represents good heart! Paul speaks in Ephesians 5:9 "for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth." Goodness is a humble heart that is so soft a seed falls right into it fully embracing it. Yes, it means a humble heart that can't even withstand the weight of a seed and embraces it. We should become a good soil. However, when our spirits turn toward the world, our wisdom and understanding darken and we become ignorant. If we further neglect our ignorance we will be hardened. Our hearts will not budge even when they are pierced and beaten. The hardening speed increases as much as you have received from God.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied the coming of the Holy Spirit. What is the grace of God when the Holy Spirit comes? It is the removal of the hardened heart. We should remove the

areas of our life that God doesn't touch. Remove the areas of your life that you don't hear the voice of God about so that it should be possible for God to speak to you about anything!

Amos says in 3:7, "Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets." We should become a bride of God and have such intimate relationship with God that He can speak anything to us. Your soul should be open to God in all areas where God can address them.

Paul speaks of the secret of God or secret of the gospel in the Ephesians. Why does he say "secret"? If everyone knows about it, then it is not a secret anymore. Paul is saying that he received it from God. Paul is implying that it was like this "Paul, I am revealing this to only you." Paul was deeply moved when God revealed the secret of gospel to him. Likewise when you, pastors, get on your knees asking God and wrestling with the word and His revelation comes to you, you have the glory of secret of gospel.

Paul also speaks in Colossians 1:26 - 27, "That is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." The hope of Jesus Christ is the mystery of glory. Understanding of the mystery deeply moved Paul. When we preach the word of God, we should be also deeply moved by the mystery of glory.

In verse 19 Paul further speaks, "And they having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." They have become callous, so they don't have senses. They are dead. They have given themselves over to sensuality for the impurities with greediness. Your soul has been moving according to the will, plan, and word of God, but now you are opening up yourself to do things completely according to your own desires. What's scary is that we can see many Christians like that in communities that have not been exposed to clear word of God and to the acknowledgement of the Spirit of God. I think this is especially true with Korean churches. If a believer has a sin, he should not be able to stand it in a church. The important lesson is that our souls should not face the direction of the world. If we don't want God in our hearts, we have a debased mind. If we continue in that state, God may say that you live the way you want. Then, it is over. We should drive our souls toward God and His glorious light.

Let's look at verse 20 "But you did not learn Christ in this way!" We should learn in a right way. What is teaching Jesus to others in a right way? Take a look at verse 21 "if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus." We need a training of directly hearing from Jesus. Pastor's job is to train the believers so they can become a people of God. Pastors are match makers. This is where the importance of revelation comes in. Like Apostle John says in 1 John 2:27, "His anointing teaches you about all things," pastors should let God directly minister the church members. They should experience God speaking directly to them through sermons. "If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus." Jesus should minister directly. Holy Spirit should minister directly. Don't let your church members be willing to die for you but to Jesus Christ.

The next question is how do we then learn Jesus Christ in the right way? We see the answer in verse 24 "and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." We find several ways of putting on the new self beginning with verse 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." It is obvious that in order to put on a new cloth we must remove the old cloth. From the spiritual perspective it can be perceived

as a battle against evil spirits and this is the first stage of battle. The real battle is between your old man and new man inside of you. This is a fierce battle. Those that know know this.

Shall we take a look at the characteristics of old man? Ephesians state “lusts of deceits” in verse 22. It means our concern over the world. If you expose your soul to the secular world, you will always fall into temptations. This is the first characteristic of the old man. We need to teach believers that those that have much concerns over the world, their old man is prospering inside. “Former manner of life” refers to the way of people live in the secular world. For example, people may bribe you saying, “This is a custom! This is not a bribe.” Things like this are examples of old man. Once God says, “No,” we should give up all things like that.

Next, we want to be renewed in the spirit of our mind according to verse 23. “Be renewed” means continue to be renewed. Don’t stop receiving the grace of God just once. Rather, we should be renewed every day before God. This is the principle of growth. Be renewed every day! This is important because our Christian walk is all about entering the Rest stage. This is a stage in which it is no longer difficult to live our Christian life. Hebrews 4:11 states “Therefore, let us be diligent to enter that rest.” Moreover, like Romans exposition we go all the way to where we no longer experience any difficulty of obeying the word of God like a space shuttle that enters the atmosphere in which it floats effortlessly. The old man should be chiseled, cut out and dead for good.

Now, what are some characteristics of new man? “And put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” New man puts on the righteousness and holiness of truth. The righteousness and holiness of truth came from God and the righteousness and holiness are the attributes that came from the truth of God. What this means is the willingness to die for the word of God. It is the same with the righteousness. The characteristic of new man is the willingness to die for whatever God says is right and the truth. In Joshua chapter 5 God commands Israelites to circumcise in front of their enemies. The situation of Israelites at the time was that they were all going to die had they chosen to circumcise all males. However, they demonstrated their willingness to die for the word of God. This is holiness. The willingness to die for the truth! Once we spiritually train our people like Ephesian Church, they should live like Joshua and Israelites.

Here is what we train our people. First, don’t let them be contaminated by the world. This world will be burned down according to the prophecy of Habakkuk. We should train to increasingly look down on the world and realize the futility of it. Second, learn Jesus in the right way by taking off the old man and put on the new man. Be renewed in your soul every day, matured, and be willing to die for the word of God. Next is found in verses from 25 to 32. If you are not contaminated by the world and learn Jesus in the right way, you can take on the third training; the training of what we speak. In the exposition of Romans and Ephesians a church witnesses Jesus Christ in three aspects. First, you should testify Jesus Christ through your life. It is called Presence. Second, if you live that life style, it means you have already embodied the character of the Lord. So you have the authority of the Lord. We have a saying “Out of being comes the form!” This is Proclamation! A believer cannot live on without the authority of words of mouth. After the training the believers in your church should have the faithfulness with regard to words they speak and the authority of words. Everything we do in ministry we do them with the words of mouth. We cast out demons with the words and blessings are also done with words. Your words are the certificate that you are a faithful man of God.

Spiritual authority refers to a condition that not a single word falls on the ground. When you pastors speak in the pulpit, not a single word falls on the ground. Why do many proverbs, James, and other books in the Bible emphasize the words? That’s because a spirit flows out of your

words. You can't see it now but a spirit is flowing out of my words. Fire and anointing also go out and the blood of Jesus covers as well.

Let's take a look at the discipline of words in verse 25 "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another." Pastors must deal with fake, hypocrisy, and false ego to the point of death. In Proverbs 3:32 "For the crooked man is an abomination to the Lord; but He is intimate with the upright." We should speak the truth. Whenever believers gather, they should share the truth with each other instead of chatting over the stories of the world and instead of lies. "For we are members of one another!" Why does Paul say to lay aside falsehood and speak truth to neighbors? Because one lies to reveal himself even at the cost of innocent life of a neighbor.

When you carefully look at the reason for lies, you can find the root of it. The root is falsehood and boast. We lie for self-righteousness and to boast. We lie to reveal us at the cost of a life. What do we call devil? The father of lies! If pastors get contaminated with this spirit of lies, that's a big trouble. We should crucify lies on the cross daily.

Paul says in verse 26, "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger." According to Galatians habitual temper (rage) is an evidence of the unsaved. Paul treats habitual temper and immorality the same in Galatians. If a pastor commits adultery with a church member, he is chased out. However, a church does not chase out a pastor that habitually blows up. I say a church should also kick him out because temper is evidence that he is not saved. When we act in a fit of temper (rage) toward our children and at home, we do not fulfill the righteousness. When we are in rage, we do not hear the voice of God. Remember to "suspend judgment" according to Beatitude. Do not react immediately in any incident or circumstance. If you discipline your children in rage and beat them, you anger them. Unless you can control your emotion do not lay your hand on them. When we can't control our emotion, we make such false judgment which leads to regrettable results. "Be angry, and yet do not sin." It means you can be angry like with righteous anger which can be controlled. "Do not let the sun go down on your anger." Why? Because when a day passes with anger it becomes a part of your personality.

Verse 27 is "and do not give the devil an opportunity." When you get angry, the devil immediately takes an opportunity not the Holy Spirit. In Greek Paul uses "*topos*" which is translated in NIV "foothold." It can also mean a fortress. In another word, when your anger passes a day, Satan starts fortifying the fortress in you. It becomes your personality.

NASV renders "opportunity." Satan uses your anger as an opportunity to seize you. Therefore, we shouldn't rage/temper. We ought to be steady or practice motion in stillness. Those that are in the stillness of God do not blow up often. One pastor said, "If you get angry, you go to hell." That's a false theology. However, "if you habitually get angry, you will go to hell" is true. We should never throw temper tantrum. Proverbs 15:1 states "A gentle answer turns away wrath but a harsh word stirs up anger." Proverbs 16:32 also states "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty." Likewise we must stop our temper.

Now, let's turn our attention to verse 29 "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear." We shouldn't tell dirty jokes but speak a word that is good for edification. Proverbs 27:21 "The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, and each is tested by the praise accorded him." People do not change when you point out their mistakes or bad things. God's principle is to prosper the grains to cover up the chaffs. His principle is not to pull the chaffs. We should always be ready to praise others and see their strengths. Upon hearing the words of pastors the souls should feel refreshed. They should also receive grace. Pastors, we should possess the authority of words of mouth.

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.” Telling dirty jokes grieves the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit hates the dirty words and the secular words. Let us restrain from speaking any words that are offensive to the Holy Spirit, negative words, and any words that cause despair. Whenever we see others, we should be able to encourage and energize them with the constructive, visionary, and powerful words.

Verse 31 “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.” Bitterness, wrath and anger are alike. Furthermore, how destructive clamor and slander are to a church! The spirit of slander works with the spirit of deception and divide a church. They also work together with the spirit of unbelief and we should not tolerate them.

Proverbs 10:19 says, “When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise.” Proverbs 18:8 also says, “The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts of the body.” It is true wherever a certain man goes, he causes estrangement and division. That’s because he talks so many words that they become his personality in the belly. Let me illustrate this. When A and B meet up and talk bad about C, then it is estrangement. If they talk about C, then the conversation should be about praise of C. If they want to speak badly about someone or rebuke him, they should do it face to face. When the spirit of estrangement and the spirit of slander are rampant in a church, they will split the church.

Paul goes on in verse 32 “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” We should tolerate others on daily basis. Therefore, we stop speaking words of estrangement and slander and speak more words of toleration, encouragement, comfort and forgiveness.

In verse 28 Paul mentions “let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.” Stealing is only mentioned in verse 28 and the point is to live a lifestyle of sharing with others.

In conclusion, the training of believers is not to open up their souls to the world. If we taught them Jesus in right ways, then their practical training is to prosper new man every day. Continue to renew the minds and crucify the former manner of life of old man. Train to decisively cut out the world, and then they will experience the authority of words through the training of their words of mouth.

How powerful is the prayer of saints who have the authority of heir gather to pray to God? The numerous pure souls’ single word becomes a powerful language to shake the heaven. Their word of prayer becomes mighty powerful. Believers are supposed to have the authority of words of mouth through spiritual training. Again, let’s do away with lies. Once we give up our lies, we will have the authority of words of mouth. Cut out the dirty words and we will have the authority of words. Do not speak the words of slandering and you will have the authority of words of mouth. May the people of authority rise up through the training of your people!