

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Ephesians 4

Once again we are continuing our verse-by-verse study through this amazing and powerful letter – that the Apostle Paul – while imprisoned in Rome – writes to the saints in Ephesus and by extension, to use here this morning –

To remind us of what we are and who we are in Christ –

Our Heavenly Father - has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places - in Christ,

And that has been the central theme of the letter –

In Christ

In Christ

Apart from Christ -

We were all dead in our trespasses - fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath

We had no communion with God

God, in His goodness, has pulled out of the mirey clay and put our feet on the Solid Rock – Jesus

We brought nothing to the table –

He did all the work, and He continues to do His work in us and through us.

As we abide in Him and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in all we do – He molds us and makes us more like Jesus.

And one of the ways that He accomplishes this work – is through each other.

As we do the work of the ministry that He called us to do and He equips and empowers us to do.

This is why we it important that we all grow up spiritually – we answer our calling and walk in our calling.

God saved us for a purpose -

Remember – all of this can only happen when we truly grasp what God has done for us, in Christ. The sitting section of Paul's letter.

But remember, Ch 4 – is the practical portion of the letter.

This is the behavior portion

This is the duty portion

This is where the walking begins –

And so – in our text this morning – Paul is going to reveal to us that believers in Christ – because of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross – even in the diversity of our personalities and our spiritual giftings and backgrounds – there are certain characteristics that **all** of us ought to have.

There is a certain style that we should all walk in.

The believer has been given a spiritual wardrobe –

And so, Paul is going to ask the question...

Who are you wearing?

Because who we wear determines the path we walk.

To put on the new man God has made us to be or to go back to the ruined rags of sin.

To wear one of two garments and walk one of two paths.

Let's pray...

Read Text -

In the opening verse of ch 4 –

Paul pleads with the saint / those who God set apart –

Paul pleads with the saint to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.

And one the things that we need to grasp as a believer is that it is a beautiful calling to be called a child of God –

We have been pulled from the brokenness of this world and been given a title of a child of the Most High.

And so – we are to honor that and walk worthy of it and walk in such a manner that we actually represent the fullness of who God is.

Much to often we hear people make the claim that they are a Child of God – but their life and their words don't line up with the Word of God and the fulness of God's heart to be the salt and light that we were called to be.

We remain in the world – to be a witness to the world.

And part of growing up is to be a testimony to a watching world as they ask the question in their own mind,

“Does Jesus really save people?”

“Does Jesus really change people?”

“Does Jesus really forgive people?”

If we are going to be a testimony to watching world – we are going to have to take that old corpse and throw it in the trash forever.

Let's look at our text -

[Eph 4:17-24 NKJV] 17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,

After chapters of overflowing excitement - piles of blessings, prayers of thanksgiving, songs of praise, we sense a change in Paul's tone.

Paul's words here are a command and a warning.

A warning to who?

To you and me.

You Christian.

You faithful saint.

You should no longer walk as the Gentiles do.

And by Gentiles - Paul means Gentile nonbelievers here –

Paul has nothing kind to say about their former way of life.

He says we need to leave it behind.

He's back to this analogy of walking that he started in verse 1.

Don't walk as the Gentiles do so that you can walk worthy with the Lord.

Paul insists on it.

It's not a suggestion, it's not negotiable.

The problem is, walking like a Gentile is natural.

We're incentivized from all sides to go the world's way.

It's not just about sinful activities.

The problem starts within, in the futility of their thoughts.

Paul is talking about mindset and mentality and attitudes and ways of thinking and identity.

And he says the Gentile way, the American way, the ungodly way, is worthless and empty.

It warps the mind and then behavior and customs and culture follows.

Turn to Leviticus 18 –

[Lev 18:1-5 NKJV] 1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'I am the LORD your God. 3 'According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. 4 'You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I [am] the LORD your God. 5 'You shall therefore

keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I [am] the LORD.

Right here in Leviticus – as God is speaking to Moses –

Challenging him to what? Don't walk like those guys

Don't make the choice

That leads to death

That leads to brokenness

Don't choose that path – but rather, walk with Me, I am your Lord, I am your King, I am He who you surrender to and walk with.

And it parallels what Paul is writing here in his letter.

Don't follow the way of the Gentiles (of the world) and be lost in that direction.

And then Paul provides us with reasons why -

18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Futile. Darkened. Excluded. Ignorant. Hard-hearted.

Paul isn't giving his opinion here –

Paul is testifying on the Lord's behalf, writing under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit.

This is God's assessment of human culture.

This is a revelation of what is true.

This is what sin has done to the human mind.

This is the reason why nonbelievers do what they do

This is the reason for their thinking

This is the reason for their behavior

And in doing and revealing their thinking and behavior Paul once again reminds us of who we used to be, apart from Christ.

We read all about it in Romans 1, where mankind refuses to acknowledge God, they refuse to accept His truth and go His way, instead they want to go this other way, and here is the result.

They are given over to the ruin of sin.

If I'm in the dark and I see a light in the distance, I have a choice.

I can head toward that light, and as I do, more and more will be illuminated around me. Or I can turn my back on the light and head further into the dark, more and more at danger, more and more aimless, more and more unable to make any meaningful progress.

That's what happens when we don't go God's way.

And the longer a person embraces that spiritual ignorance, the more insensitive they become to the Lord.

The unbeliever's mind is dark – because they believe lies

I am not saying that they are incapable of understanding or incapable of thinking – or incapable of making morale decisions – what I am saying and what the scriptures reveal is that their understanding is dark because the things of God are spiritual and they are spiritually discerned.

The unbeliever finds away to push God out of their thinking.

And the moment that we push God out of our thinking – we find ways to push godly living out of our thinking and then we make unfortunate decisions.

The unbeliever is spiritually dead – because they are alienated from the life of God.

The unbeliever surrenders themselves to all kind of sin – because they live in the lie, they live in the darkness, and the presence of the Holy Spirit isn't in them.

Our response might be – that we understand this for the nonbeliever – those apart from Christ.

But why is it a problem in the life of a believer?

Why is it a problem in the person who believes in Jesus and loves Jesus and wants to walk in Jesus?

Because in a very real sense, sometimes we surrender to lies, sometimes, we allow the old man to dictate our passions and pleasures and sometimes we surrender ourselves to those passions and pleasures.

And the longer we allow ourselves to walk under those conditions – usually what happens is we develop a blindness of heart.

And we don't want to become blind in our heart –

Because when we become blind in the heart – we stop seeing the needs of the people around us. Because we become self-focused – What about me? What about my feelings?

God longs for the believer to have the eyes of our hearts wide open.

We saw this a few weeks ago in ch1 – in Paul's prayer regarding the saints – that the eyes of their hearts may be enlightened to the things of God, to the hope of His calling

And so what happens next – when our hearts are blind to the things of God and we are alienated from God – we become callous.

I had you make a note of the phrase “being past feeling”

The idea is that the natural man goes to sin like a child to a hot oven and is burned.

But then, he doesn't heed the warnings.

And so, once his skin heals, he grabs the oven again and again and again, causing more and more damage to himself but being less and less sensitive to it.

In 1 Timothy 4, Paul says our consciences can become seared when we don't walk with God.

The person who has a calloused heart to God and the things of God doesn't care how much he or she shocks those around him or her as long as they gratify their desires.

This is the person who says – I don't care what you say or what you think – and they are oblivious to circumstances or condition.

This is the person who has no boundaries whatsoever

50 – 60 years ago – people would never do in public what we see today.

We live in a culture today where people are doing whatever they want – outwardly.

And our culture allows it - Not because we have become more conscious or more spiritual or more aware –

We have just become more callous and ignorant to who God is – and that is why our culture is the way it is.

So Paul is reminding us – “Jesus has saved you, your life was meant to be different”

20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

Paul gives us encouragement here.

The Gentile Christians he was talking to were promiscuous, greedy, impure, unbelievers before they were saved.

But now they were new.

Now they knew Christ.

Paul says to the Ephesians, “Because you know Christ, you are no longer darkened, ignorant, and excluded - you’re illuminated, instructed, and included!”

This is good news!

What does it mean to know Christ?

It means we know the principles and the Person.

When the Ephesians were first born again, they knew very little about the content of Christianity.

They hadn't learned all the doctrines and stories and prophecies.

They would grow in that knowledge as they received teaching and studied God's Word.

Remember, Paul was the Sr Pastor there in Ephesus for 2 years.

He taught them the principles of faith.

But God also wants us to know the Person - to understand His heart, His way of thinking, His character and His presence.

If we think we know the principles but don't know Person, then we don't really know Christ.

This was the problem of the Pharisees.

They knew the Hebrew Bible.

They had it memorized!

But they didn't know the heart of God. They didn't know the Person.

This is one of the main reason a believer stumbles

This is why we revert back to the old man

We stop learning about our Lord and we stop pressing into the heart of God.

We become content in our knowledge of God and in our relationship with God.

We think we have it all under control.

We think we got this. "I have been a Christian for 40 years" So what?

We think we can just put it in spiritual cruise control.

When the truth is – none of us have got it.

We need to hear from Jesus

We need to know Jesus

We need to be taught by Jesus

IN Rom 10 – Paul asks a series of questions -

[Rom 10:14-15 NKJV] 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent?

We Christians do not only have the responsibility of living the Christian life, but also of inviting others into a life with Christ by the preaching of the Gospel.

God has sent everyone of us to someone so that we can preach Christ to them by our words and actions and personal testimony.

As believers, we're all invited to learn more and more about the Lord as we walk with Him.

Learning more about the principles and plans revealed in the Scripture, and more about His Person as we live in His presence.

The teachings of Jesus stand in stark contrast to the teachings of this world.

The world says – watch out for self, take care of yourself – if you don't watch out for your self and take care of yourself no one will. Be first – don't be last.

Live life to the fullest

While Jesus says, that the first will be last, and the last will be first.

Jesus says that the person who loses his life will save it.

Jesus speaking to Martha -

[Jhn 11:25-26 NKJV] 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Paul tells us that that the word lies

The truth is in Jesus!!!

Where is the source of salvation? Jesus

How do we receive forgiveness of sin? Jesus

How do we receive eternal life? Jesus

The truth is in Jesus

And here is the thing – the truth never changes.

And there are four things that never change.

God the Father – never changes. He is immutable

Jesus – never changes. Jesus is the same yesterday, and today and forever (Heb 13:8)

The Holy Spirit never changes –

So if the Father never changes and the Son never changes and the Holy Spirit never changes -

The fourth thing that never changes – everything they say and do.

It is Jesus that sets us free from hardness and darkness and deadness and reckless uncleanness.

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your

mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

The Apostle Paul's message to the church –

Don't be the way you used to be

Don't be the way you were raised

The reason we are to be different is because of Jesus

So Paul says that we are to put off our old self – everything that we were apart from Christ.

This includes, our old way of thinking, our old way of acting

And we are to put on the new man

How do we take it off this old man / this dead garment?

It's not just behavior modification, though as we walk with God our behaviors change.

Our desires change.

Our mentality changes.

God gives us the power to take of the old self and instead walk worthy of our calling.

The old self was crucified with Christ. We have the power to leave the Gentile way and walk with Him. It's not a matter of if we can, but of if we will.

The question we each need to ask ourselves is: Do I walk with God?

Am I putting on the new self?

Have we determined in our hearts to be what God has made us to be?

And here is the amazing thing –

We don't have to make it happen.

God has already done it.

He's already supplied the garment.

Our task is not to weave the garment but to wear it.

We have a choice, day-by-day.

Will we exhume the dead corpse of our old nature and wear it's rotting skin, or will we put on the new self - the one created in the likeness of Christ Jesus?

The one where we think like Him and talk like Him and love like Him and endure like Him and react like Him.

The new self that is uncontaminated even though we live in a contaminated world.

We fill our heart with the spirit, we will live differently

We fill our mid with Jesus, we will think differently

Jesus changes us from the inside out

It is not simply behavior modification – that is not enough.

God wants something deeper –

He wants us to come to the decision – that we want to be more like Jesus

And by His grace – He will make us like Jesus

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

An old dead guy once said,

I am not what I ought to be.

I am not what I want to be.

I am not what I will be.

But thank God I am not what I used to be.

Every single believer can echo that statement.

Thank God I am not what I used to be –

We put on Jesus

Wrap ourselves in His truth and righteousness and be renewed, strengthened, illuminated, empowered day-by-day, becoming more and more like Him

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

