Walking in the way of Jesus

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[0:00] Please be seated. Good morning, and it is a delight to be back again with you this morning to open up God's words.

! Thank you for your prayers during the week. If you would please take your Bibles and turn them to Ephesians chapter 4, and we'll be in verses 17 through 24.
Ephesians chapter 4, verses 17 through 24. As you turn there, you probably remember the story, the story of the redemption of the Israelites from Egypt.
You remember the puzzling and the tragic story that it is sometimes. If you've read it, you know it.
You remember the Israelites had just witnessed a great display of God's power in the ancient world.
God had stretched out his arm over Pharaoh and the Egyptian empire. He had struck the land with devastating plagues, executed judgment over their idols, and the Israelites redeemed his people by the blood of the Passover lamb.
[1:19] He then leads them through the Red Sea. He parts the waters, and he marches them through dry land, and he sweeps Pharaoh's chariots into the depth of the sea.

And you remember as they walk through the wilderness, he feeds them miraculously, gives them manna every morning from heaven, and quenches their thirst with water from a desert rock.
But yet, in Numbers 11, you come to a passage that's puzzling you. You read about the Israelites murmuring and complaining.
They speak of their dissatisfaction. They weep and cry out, and they say, If only we had meat to eat. We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost.
The cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. Now our appetite is gone. We never see anything but this manna.
[2:26] Consider the sheer spiritual insanity of a cry like that. They were longing for garlic and onions out of Egypt because they had forgotten the whip of their taskmaster.

They'd forgotten the bitter cries of their children being thrown into the Nile. They forgot the endless, soul-crushing work of slavery. In their twisted memory, the prison of Egypt had become a paradise.
They longed to go back time and again. They wanted to go back to Egypt. Remember, God actually took the Israelites out of Egypt in 24 hours.
But it actually took about 40 years to take Egypt out of their mindset. As we reflect on that story, maybe we can see analogies to our own Christian lives.
We, too, like the Israelites, we are prone to going back to our old taskmasters. So you remember how Moses commands the Israelites.
[3:40] God commands the Israelites in Leviticus 18.3. He says, Years later, the apostle Paul, writing to a small church in Ephesus, he kind of mirrors the same thing.

He mirrors the same commandment. And he says to the church, he says, So I tell you this, and insist on it, in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.
In the futility of their thinking. The believers he is writing to, they have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. So he's reminding them, You have been redeemed.
You have been purchased. You have been moved from death to life. So do not walk like you're used to. So before we open, get into our sermon, let me read God's word, and pray and ask for his help.
This is Ephesians chapter 4, verses 17 through 24. This is God's word. So I tell you this, and insist on it, in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.
[5:11] They are darkened in their understanding, and separated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality, so as to indulge in every kind of impurity.

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And they are full of greed. That, however, is not the way of life you learned, when you heard about Christ, and were taught in him, in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.
You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds, and to put on the new self, created to be like God, in true righteousness and holiness.
The grass withers, the flowers fade, the word of our God lasts forever. Let's pray. Good and gracious God, we come to you, and we ask what we have asked of you a thousand times before. Lord, we ask that you would draw near to us as we open up your words. Would you speak to us? Would you move by your spirit afresh to open up our hearts and our eyes to behold wonderful things from your words?
[6:41] Would you cause us to live as saints who have been raised from the grave, saints who have been liberated from Egypt?

Help us, O God, as we consider your words. We need your help. Condescend to us, and give us light. We pray and ask all of these things. In Jesus' name.
Amen. This morning, as we consider what Paul has to say, what God has to say, we have to remind ourselves that we are no longer slaves.
No longer slaves. We are no longer slaves in Egypt. We are no longer slaves to our former ways of living. If we have really believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have been set free from our bondage to sin.
But here in these verses, in 17 through 24, Paul makes three movements, I think. Firstly, he shows us the pattern of the old life, in verses 17 through 19, the pattern of the old life.
[7:46] And secondly, he shows us the power of God, in verses 20 and 21. The pattern of the old life, in 17, 18, and 19, how we must not walk.

And secondly, the power of God, verses 20 and 21. You have encountered the living God. If you're a believer, here this morning, you have encountered the living God.
And thirdly, he reminds us of the pattern of the new life. Verses 22 and 24, how we must walk.
So pattern of the old life, how we must not walk. The power of God, in verses 20 and 21, you have encountered the living God.
And thirdly, the pattern of the new life, how we must walk. Firstly, the pattern of the old life, how we must not walk.
[8:48] Paul, in verse 17, begins with a Salem command. He, he wants us to take attention. He wants us to, to pay attention, because this is an apostolic command that he assures to the church in Ephesus.

And he's assuring this to the church here in Edinburgh. And he says this, so I tell you this, and insist on it, in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.
In, in the NIV, it says, you must no longer live as the Gentiles do. But in, in the, in the ESV and in the Greek, Paul is getting at, what he usually gets at.
He's using an, an analogy, rather, of walking. He says, you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do. Walking is Paul's favorite term to talk about moral conduct, daily lifestyle, and habitual choices. Paul is saying, if you have truly received Christ, and rested on Christ, and if he is truly your Savior, and Lord, you must no longer walk like you used to.
[10:06] And, in verses 18, 19, he gives us an anatomy of the old life, a pattern of how we used to, to live.

So, here in these two verses, in verses 18 and 19, Paul gives us a step-by-step process of, of, of how sin works, a pattern of the old life, an anatomy of sin.
So, here, in verse 18, he actually starts by telling us that Gentiles, who we used to be, we were hardened in our hearts, firstly, which then, to Paul, causes a darkened and futile mind.
A hardened heart causes a dark, darkened and futile mind, which then leads to alienation from God, which then leads to a callous conscience, which then leads to an insatiable indulgence, a desire to want more and more and more from what the world, the flesh, and the devil offers.
So, firstly, a hardened heart. In verse 18, towards the end of it, he says, they are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.
[11:25] Paul actually traces the ultimate root of human ruin back to the hardness of hearts. He refers to a heart that has become stone hard, a heart that has become very stubborn, a heart that

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resists and shuts out God's truth.

You remember Pharaoh, how he repeatedly hardened his heart against God's voice, and his heart was entirely ruined. The old life, Paul says, begins with a quiet but willful heart refusal toward God. And that hardened heart actually leads to futile thinking, and then darkened understanding. In verse 17, towards the end, he describes the Gentiles this way.
Don't walk, no longer live as the Gentiles do in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding. So a hardened heart actually not just corrupts our affections, what we love, but it in turn affects the way we think.
Sin affects the way we think, the way we understand things. So a hardened heart leading to futile thinking, a darkened understanding. refers to an empty, dead-end way of thinking that leaves God out of the equation.
[12:54] The scary reality of sin is that it darkens the mind. Our capacity to rationalize and reason gets darkened.

When the heart hardens, the mind stops seeing clearly. So step one, hardened heart. Step two, futile thinking. Step three, separated from the life of God.
When we start thinking of life apart from God, we're told darkened thinking naturally produces spiritual death.
Alienated from the life of God, they become cut off from the uncreated dynamic spiritual life from the creator.
The spiritual strays, they are refugees, they're wandering in the desert apart from the fountains of living water.
[14:01] Step one, hardening of heart which leads to futile darkened thinking, which leads to separation from God, which then leads to a callous conscience, conscience.

When a soul is cut off from God's life, its moral nervous system shuts down. It ceases to feel pain. It becomes totally numb and deadened to feeling. Think of a manual laborer's hands. The first day he swings a sledgehammer, his hands bleed and they form painful blisters.
But if he keeps swinging it day after day, the dead skin builds up into a thick insensitive callous. Eventually you could stick a pin through the callous and he wouldn't flinch.
That's what Paul is describing. Repeatedly ignoring God's word applies a callous to the soul until the conscience loses its capacity for shame or grief or conviction.
[15:15] A callous conscience which then leads to step five an insatiable indulgence, insatiable greed, the desire for more and more and more once the moral pain is gone.

All the resistance we have vanishes, the soul actually plummets into self indulgence. Just warns more and more and more.
Paul gives us here an anatomy of the old life. Step one, hardening heart leading to futile thinking which leads to separation from the living God which leads to a callous conscience which then leads to an insatiable greed, indulgence, wanting more and more and more.
So it is a linear process. One leads to the other which leads to the other but it's also a cyclical process. If you think about it, insatiable indulgence actually leads to hardness of heart more and more.
Step five leading to step one which leads to step two and so on and so forth. This, you were like this, you were locked into an endless loop.
[16:42] You've probably seen it, you've probably seen it in addiction. Addiction to all kinds of things.

That's the pattern. But if you think about it, addiction is really a magnified picture of what sin looks like every day, isn't it?
Addiction just screams loudly so that we can see the minute ways in which sin works. This is the pattern of the old life.
Sin is like sea water, salt water. You think it will satisfy you, you drink and then it doesn't. You drink more, it doesn't and it will kill you.
If you're honest, that's how we were before we encountered the Lord Jesus Christ. I became a believer when I was 20, so I remember my life way before that.
[17:50] and I don't know if you do, maybe you've never known a day when Jesus Christ was not your savior. Praise God for that.

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The pattern that Paul is describing is the pattern of the old life, a life that is restless and a life that is stuck in a loop.
Like the church father said, our hearts are restless until they find the rest in God.
We were restless and the good thing is our former pattern of life was met with the power of God.
Verses 20 and 21. So the first point, the pattern of the old life which we must put off. We must not walk that way.
[18:48] And Paul then reminds them that they have indeed encountered the living God, the living God, the power of God.

They have indeed found rest. They have found rest. Their hearts have found rest. So verse 20, Paul says, that however is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.
Let the Gentiles walk that way. They can drink salt water. Let Egypt chase its empty idols, but that's not who you are.
You didn't learn Christ this way. And Paul uses an astonishing choice of words here in verse 20. And the old translations and the ESV especially captures it very clearly.
You did not learn, you learned Christ. That's what Paul says. This is not the way you learned Christ. Paul is making a distinguish, he's distinguishing between learning Christianity as a religion and learning the Lord Jesus Christ.
[20:21] You learn a subject, a language, a set of legal cords, but here he says, you learned Christ, meaning that you had an encounter with the living God.

He had an encounter with the living God and he says in verse 21, when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.
He's reminding them something radical has happened to them. Something radical has happened to them. It has changed them. They are no longer alienated from God.
They are no longer Gentiles. They've been brought into the family of God. So, in chapter 1, for example, in Ephesians chapter 1, Paul reminds them of the Trinitarian salvation that they have. Paul would tell them in Ephesians 1, verses 3 through 6, that before the foundation of the world, before you ever took a breath or committed a sin, God the Father chose you, and he loved you with an unmerited love, and he predestined you to be rescued by the Lord Jesus Christ.
[21:49] In Ephesians 2, you read verses 7 through 12, Ephesians 1 rather, 7 through 12, in Jesus, you have full redemption through his blood.

Jesus Christ actually gives us actual, complete forgiveness for all of our trespasses, all of our trespasses. So the Father who loved you before the stars were made, the Son who gave his life for you to ransom you, and the Holy Spirit who is your guarantee and seal in verses 13 and 14 in chapter 1.
The Holy Spirit actually applied the work of the Lord Jesus Christ into your heart. You have encountered the living God. You have learned Christ.
Jesus said, come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And you came. You came to the Lord Jesus Christ. You came and you rested on him. You received him. And your restless heart actually found rest in the Lord Jesus Christ.
[23:10] He called, he shouted, he broke through your deafness, he shattered your darkness, and washed away your blindness.

He made you his own. God. He came to the Lord Jesus Christ. You have encountered the living God.
Maybe you have. If you have been a believer, you have encountered the living God. Maybe you are not a believer this morning. Maybe you're visiting, and maybe you grew up in the church, but you have never really rested on the Lord Jesus Christ and received him.
But hear this, Jesus Christ came to rescue out of your addiction, out of your sin patterns. He came to rescue from yourself.
He came to rescue from your restless heart. Paul says this in 1 Timothy, this saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.
[24:27] That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Christ Jesus came into the world to save you, all of you, regardless of where you find yourself.

So put off your old self. Encounter the living God, rest on the Lord Jesus Christ and receive him.

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And thirdly, after reminding them of their former way of life, the pattern of the old life, and the power of God that transformed them.
Thirdly, he reminds them of the pattern of the new life. Pattern of the new life. In verses 22 and 24, he tells them about a new pattern of living.
But I'll read from verse 20, 21, 22, and 24 again. That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.
[25:45] You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds, and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

He gave initially an anatomy of the old life, and now he tells them that they have encountered the Lord Jesus Christ.
Something radical has happened to them, and now he is giving them a pattern for the new life.
Believers have experienced a radical transformation.
If you're a believer, you have been rescued, you have been resurrected. So, in verse 22, he says, put off the old self. Put off the old self.
Paul is using a wardrobe imagery to talk about taking off filthy garments, and he's reminding us that we need to put on a new self, put on what is true.
[27:03] put off the old self. Why? Because decisively, at the cross, you put off your old self.

Jesus died for you. Because Jesus died for you at the cross, and you were crucified with Christ at the cross, you are no longer bound to the old way of life.
I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.
Put off the old self, because at the cross something decisive has happened to you. You were crucified with Christ. Your old self is dead, so put it off. And then be continually renewed in the spirit of your mind, verse 23, to be made new in the attitude of your mind.
Your minds were futile, they were darkened, but the spirit who made you alive not only gave you a new heart, he made you breathe again, but he also gave you understanding, he opened up your eyes so that you can behold wonderful things from God's words.
[28:27] so put off the old self which was crucified with Christ. Be renewed in the attitude of your minds and put on, verse 24, the new life, put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Something radical has happened to you. you were crucified with Christ, but more than that happened to you. You were raised with Christ.
Not only did you die in Christ, you rose with him. And because you rose with him, you share in the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus Christ.
So put on the new self. Put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Don't have time to unpack all of that, but if you were to go and read the rest of the book, Paul actually gives us three kind of ways in which we can do it.
He talks about the church and community life in Ephesians 4.25 through 5.2. He talks about how we can put on the new life in the public, in the world that we live in, in Ephesians 5.3 through 21.
[30:01] Then he talks about how we can put on the new life in our private lives, in our home life. He talks about the marriage between a man and a woman.

Paul is reminding you this morning of the new pattern of life that you must walk in.
You have died with Christ. You've been raised with Christ. So be continually renewed in the spirit of your minds.
And here, as Paul finishes, he is hinting at the story of the Bible, isn't he? He says, and to put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.
He is hinting at the fact that we are being renewed into a new likeness, like God in your translations. But in the ESV, in the Greek, likeness of God, referring to the fact that long, long time ago, your forefather, Adam, was created in God's likeness.
[31:21] He was created in God's likeness. He reflected God. That's what he was called to do. But you remember how he fell. He fell. When Adam fell, we fell in him, in Adam.

but here we have the end of that story. Adam fell and we fell in Adam and the image of God in us then was marred.

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But God is actually at the business. He's in the business of remaking you. He's in the business of remaking you so that you might reflect God.
So the image of God may be restored. So, in conclusion, walk as who you are.
Walk as a true self. We talk about living authentically in our life and age these days.
[32:24] We talk about being true to yourself. Paul is calling us to be true to our real self. Because the former way of life is no more.

You have died with Christ. The pattern of the old life is no more. Don't walk in that. Because you have encountered the living God. The pattern of the new life.
That is who you really are. You've been loved by the Lord Jesus Christ. You've been died for by the Lord Jesus Christ. You've been raised together with the Lord Jesus Christ.
So live as who you really are. The Christian life is a pilgrimage, isn't it? It's a walk, really, to the promised land.
Just like the Israelites were liberated from Egypt, we have been liberated, but we're on our journey. We're on our journey to the promised land.
[33:26] Some of us are closer to getting there than others. Some of us are very young in our walk. But you will meet your Savior at the end of it.

You will get to the promised land if you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, if he is your treasure, if he has satisfied your soul. He met you at the well, remember.
He met you at the well and he said, I will give you living water. Never be thirsty again. So keep on keeping on.
Keep on keeping on. March through this wilderness. You'll surely arrive at the promised land. But remember, you're no longer slaves anymore.
Don't live like slaves. Live like sons who have been redeemed. May God bless the reading and preaching of his word.
[34:27] May he apply these truths into our hearts. May he cause us to walk like a son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray. God, we thank you for your words.

We thank you for fresh reminders of truths we've known, truths we've cherished all our lives. we ask, God, that you would go before us as you did the Israelites, the pillar of fire by night, the pillar of cloud by morning, the angel of the Lord directing Moses and the Israelites through the wilderness to the promised land.
We need your guidance. We need your help. So as we continue our walk, so as we embark on a new walk, be our strength and be our guides.
We pray and ask all of these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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