

Ephesians 4:17–24

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[0 : 00] that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart.

They have become callous, have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ. Assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning.

Good morning. Let me quickly hasten to add my word of welcome to Christ Church Chicago this morning. My name is Joe Pace, and I'm a part of the pastoral team here at the church.

If this is your first time visiting with us, welcome.

[1 : 33] Thank you for worshiping with us on this beautiful Palm Sunday morning. Let's take a moment, a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for this beautiful day that you have made.

We are here to rejoice and be glad in it as we now come to the critical moment of sitting under your word.

Speak to us. Speak to your people. Strengthen your people through your word. Let me decrease that you might increase.

We give you all glory, honor, and praise. In your son's name we do pray and give thanks. Amen. So it was time for my senior class trip.

The year was 19. It doesn't really matter. I've been looking forward to this trip for months, and my friends and I had already made plans for all the things we were going to sneak off from the group and do.

[2 : 46] It's the day of the trip, and my parents are taking me to the school to drop me off. We pull up. I grab my things from the back, hoping to just exchange hugs and kisses as I got out of the car, but no.

My dad wants to have the talk before I go. Now, the talk really just consists of variation on four different statements.

First, he'll quote a passage from Proverbs. You know the Bible says, the eyes of the Lord are everywhere, watching the evil and the good.

What a scripture to use to scare a child. Secondly, he'll say, don't get out there and embarrass us.

Third, we'll come, just because everyone else is doing it doesn't mean you have to do it.

And lastly, he'd close out with, remember who you are and what you've been taught. Those statements just hung over my head like a dark cloud ready to rain on all my plans.

[4 : 09] How unfair. Why couldn't I just do what everybody else was doing? Why is it just because I was born into this family did there have to be a different standard for me than for all the other kids?

So I was preparing and studying this text this whole scene came rushing back to me. And like a parent, Paul speaks to all of us this morning through this text.

Remember who you are and what you've been taught. So as you've been following this incredible series of messages from Pastor Dave and Pastor Bing in the weeks preceding this one and how this book of Ephesians so eloquently and succinctly outlines the mission of the church, indeed the very mission of Christ Church Chicago, you've begun to see his plan, purpose, pattern through proclamation and prayer and how we participate, grow the church, guard the unity, pursue purity.

You've also heard how chapter four begins by dealing with walking in a manner worthy of our calling, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace and then exploring, as we

heard so well last week from Pastor Bing, the diverse beauty of the church and the varying gifts within the body and how through the primacy of the word, all these things are to work together for the equipping of the saints and further about the pursuit of unity within the body and preserving the gospel by speaking the truth in love.

Paul now shifts in this morning's passage to become very practical in admonishing the church how they are to apply these truths to their personal walk.

[6 : 09] Paul challenges us personally and indeed collectively as a church body that if, here it is, Christ's church is going to be the mature, grown-up church it's called to be, we're going to have to, one, reconsider our old ways.

Two, remember what we've been taught. And thirdly, renew our minds. Reconsider, remember, renew.

These three distinct movements of the mind will form the basis for our time together in the word.

First, reconsider our old walk. One of the things I love about Paul is that he's never content merely to expound doctrine and truth without also taking pains to see that the truth he shared is applied to believers' lives, getting in our business, so to speak.

Doctrine, truth, and application going hand in hand. First notice in the beginning of the verse, verse 17, how Paul sets the tone for the message he's about to deliver.

Now I say and testify in the Lord. In other words, as God is my witness, hear what I'm about to tell you. Those of you with siblings may understand this concept.

[7 : 38] It's one thing for your sister or brother to tell you to do something, and it's another thing when they say, Dad said for you to do something. The message might be coming from your sister, but the authority behind the message is coming from Dad.

It's in this authority that Paul now speaks. No longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds.

Catch this crazy irony. Paul is talking to Gentiles, telling Gentiles to stop acting like Gentiles. How is this possible?

Well, here it is. It's the same way I can say to all of us, sinners. The Bible says, born in sin and shaped in iniquity, but now somehow gripped by God's amazing grace to stop acting like the sinners we once were before God saved us.

We're changed now. We're different now. We're free now. We look different now. Quickly catch the verbiage Paul uses here, no longer walk.

[8 : 56] Well, to no longer walk means that at some point in time, you used to walk. Kills me how some Christians accept Christ and then somehow act like they forgot what sin was and can no longer relate to the sinners they used to be.

Be careful. Paul is reminding us that all these things I'm about to talk about in these next few verses used to be you. And in fact, for some, there's still a propensity for it to be you.

Or I wouldn't need to write you and tell you to stop and remind you of who you are. Now, in the last part of this verse, Paul introduces perhaps the most critical component to this entire passage.

And you'll see he refers to it throughout the entire text. The futility of their minds. The mind, the mind, the mind. The old way of thinking, acting.

Futility of your mind, that means you're thinking in a way that actually leads nowhere and is incapable of producing any useful result.

[10 : 10] Yes, with all that man has accomplished, smart as man may be, all that man has attained, it's all pointless, meaningless, futile, without Christ.

It's like you're wandering aimlessly through life like a ship without a sail. Second Timothy puts it this way, always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Look, to get your walk right, you have to get your mind right. Your mind right. Your feet don't dictate your direction.

It's your mind that tells your feet where to go. Verses 18 and 19, Paul further describes the attributes and characteristics of those on this mindless, futile walk.

First, they are darkened in their understanding. Notice again the reference to the mind. Darkened here is probably best translated to make blind.

[11 : 17] Paul says in Romans chapter 1, for although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools. The way they reason and think through things is literally in the dark. It's like putting a puzzle together whose pieces have all the answers to life with the lights turned off.

Instead of assembling the puzzle in the light provided by God through Jesus Christ, the light of the world, they would rather pull down the shade even further and insist on working in the dark, even though it's a hopeless pursuit.

Secondly, they are alienated from a life of God. Alienated, estranged, separated, no connection with, indifferent, especially where there used to once be a connection.

It means that we're no longer on speaking terms. You're not talking to God and you can't hear God talking to you. Isaiah says, but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

[12:48] Sin separates. Sin disconnects. Sin breaks fellowship. Sin alienates. Alienation then is a byproduct of ignorance and a hard heart.

Still here in verse 18. because of the ignorance, again a mind reference, that is in them due to their hardness of heart. It's real hard to be close to something you know nothing about.

It's hard to be close to something you don't care about. It's hard to claim we have a friendship and you don't even know me. when I first started doing music and doing albums and they started doing okay nationally, I would get these random phone calls from people trying to get me to remember them from middle school.

Hey, this is Roger. You remember me from Miss Miller's class, seventh grade? Seventh grade.

Seventh grade. Then they would try to reap some benefit from a relationship we never had.

The Bible says there are going to be many trying to do the exact same thing in the last day.

Matthew chapter seven. They're going to cry out, Lord, Lord, you remember me and all the things I did in your name and the Lord will say, I never knew you.

[14:18] Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. So now verse 19 concludes this dark description by saying they have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

Now to become callous is to become so hardened that you lose all sensitivity. And it usually comes as a result of repetitive behavior over time.

You don't feel anything. And certainly you have no sensitivity to the things of God. Don Ritzman says here, callousness moves beyond mere spiritual ignorance to a place where the very conscience becomes so desensitized that it can no longer exert a restraining influence on the conduct and can no longer provide conviction that may lead to repentance.

Once that spiritual line is crossed, crossed into a state of callousness, life then easily, as this verse indicates, surrenders itself, gives up itself to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

It indeed becomes with repetition the prevailing, rampant, and dominant way of living one's life. we must reconsider our old ways.

[15:49] Not only must we do this, but secondly, Paul, just like a wise parent, now transitions and encourages us in verses 20 and 21 to remember what we've been taught.

but that is not the way you learn Christ, assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him as the truth in Jesus. Now, the truth in Jesus.

This isn't truth revealed to you after four years of seminary or Simeon Trust preaching workshops. I attended my first one a couple weeks ago, by the way, and oh my God, I'm still processing it.

This, however, is basic fundamental truth. Truth you learned in the beginning when you first accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. The truth you hear week in and week out behind this pulpit.

The truth you glean through your daily devotions and walk with the Lord. I would submit that the very act of repentance itself and becoming a follower of Jesus requires an acknowledgement of the truth and a change of mind.

[17:07] And while we're here, let me make one thing abundantly clear. The only way any of this works is in him. As this verse says, in Jesus.

That's the fuel that makes this engine go. No other truth, no other way, no other path, just Jesus.

John chapter 14, Jesus says himself, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. this is what Paul is getting at. Even this fundamental exposure to the truth ought to be enough to govern how you walk.

It's like one of your parents saying to you after you've done something you know you weren't supposed to, now you know I taught you better than this. Paul here is saying, you know better. This isn't you. This isn't like you. This isn't a reflection of who you really are. You now know Christ. And because you now know Christ, you now know the truth because he is the truth.

[18:17] So why walk around living a lie while denying the truth you already know? It's like saying you're married, but every time you walk out the house, you take your ring off.

Denying the truth and who you really are. We must reconsider our old ways, remember what we've been taught, and then finally renew our minds.

It starts here in verse 22. To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires.

Now in case you've already forgotten what your old self was, let's go back to Ephesians chapter 2. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

That is your old self. That self has already been crucified with Christ. Romans chapter 6. Take off those old clothes. Take off those dirty clothes, those sinful clothes.

[19:51] That uniform you're wearing doesn't even belong to the team you're supposed to be playing for. What would it look like if the Bulls were playing the Lakers and LeBron came running out of the tunnel with a Bulls uniform on?

Wait a minute. That's not right. You're under contract with the Lakers. The Lakers pay you to play for them. Your team is in L.A. You live in L.A.

Your family's in L.A. Why would you then get to Chicago and decide to change uniforms? God sent his son to die for you and pay the ultimate sacrifice so that you could be on this team.

Why would you insist on wearing a different uniform? The story's told about Mickey Cohen who was a notorious gangster in Los Angeles during the 40s and 50s.

He even spent some time here in Chicago. After hearing Billy Graham speak at a Los Angeles crusade, he proclaimed that he had become a Christian. He claimed that he put his faith in Jesus.

[21:05] He claimed that he had prayed the sinner's prayer. However, his life changed very little.

When confronted about his ongoing lifestyle of crime, he said, they're Christian football players.

Christian cowboys and Christian politicians. Why can't there be a Christian gangster? Do you know any Mickey Coens?

Do you perhaps at times still see any Mickey Cohen in yourself? Come on, tell the truth. Every now and then, do you go back in your closet and try those jeans on that you know you can't fit anymore? Being a Christian is not a fad or a cute slogan. It's not about wearing a cross around your neck as a fashion statement. When you become a follower of Jesus Christ and learn of him, a complete wardrobe change has to take place.

put off the old self. Those old clothes. So, how do you do it? Glad you asked.

[22:22] Verse 23, by being renewed in the spirit of your minds. I told you earlier to change your walk you had to change your mind.

You've got to change how you think. Hear me, Christ Church. If we're going to be the church God has called us to be, it will require a changed mindset.

A different world view. Once you've accepted Christ as your personal savior, because none of this is possible without divine empowerment, then to renew your mind, you have to constantly feed your mind with the truth of God's word.

word. This is an ongoing process. Repeated exposure to God's word will shape the way you think. It will shape the way you process things. The word reminds us of what Christ has done for us and who we are in him.

[23:27] Paul uses similar language in Romans chapter 12 saying, do not be conformed to this world. but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

I see maybe we need more biblical support about the mind. If I got my lesson right, Pastor Dave, this would be good old theology, not context. Colossians says, to set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.

Isaiah says, you'll have perfect peace if you keep your mind stayed on him. Philippians says, let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus. Paul says again in Romans, to set the mind on the

flesh is death, but to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace.

Finally, brothers, Philippians says, whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, if there's any excellence, if there's anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Renew your mind and remember who you are. Well, that begs the question, who are you?

[24 : 39] Verse 24, you are now one who has or should put on the new self, the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

The renewal of mind empowers you to take off those old clothes and get dressed all over again. You've got new clothes now, clothes that can't be found in any high-end designer fashion store because these clothes come from heaven's holy boutique created by the master designer God himself using the finest fabric purchased with his own son's precious blood.

Don't worry about the fit because one size fits all because he died for everybody regardless of your past, your mistakes, where you're from, regardless of whether you're rich, poor, educated, or uneducated, regardless of your history, color, or culture, these clothes fit you because his blood still works.

So in closing, in closing, here's the question, here's the simple question. After experiencing the finest threads ever made, why would you then get up in the morning, take a bath, get cleaned up, go to the laundry room, pull out your old, dirty, smelly, muddy clothes from the basket, and put those clothes back on, and then declare yourself ready for the day.

You're not ready. All you've done is taken what was clean and made it dirty again. Don't do it. The old self has been crucified with Christ.

[26 : 56] Take that off. And the new self is made alive by the Holy Spirit. Put that on. Church, let's be the mature church God has called us to be.

reconsider your old walk. Remember what you've been taught and renew your mind.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for the reminder this morning of who we are in you. Thank you for your sacrifice on the cross.

Thank you for your blood that washed us white as snow. We've got new clothes now and we thank you for the privilege of wearing new clothes.

God, please remind us to not go back to the way things used to be, but to press forward toward the mark that you've called us to.

[28 : 06] Father, we thank you for this word. Seal it in our hearts. lest we always find ourselves looking back and not going forward. We give your name praise and thanks.

In your son's precious name we pray. Amen. Amen. Let's