

The New Way of Walking (Think Like a Christian)

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[0:00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Welcome aboard.

All right. You've all seen these advertisements before. Maybe it's a late night TV program. Maybe it is in some kind of, I don't know, magazine you're looking at.

Imagine with me, the Gut Buster 3000. And you have a before and after picture. The before picture is of Jim. He's 38 years old and he's gigantic.

[1:40] He's huge, head disheveled, sticking his gut out so you can see his size. And he probably plays Donkey Kong in his parents' basement. That's the kind of impression you get with Jim.

That's the before picture. And then there's the after picture. Jim, 185, 3% body fat. Hair is impeccable. He is on a yacht with ladies.

You know what I mean? It's like the Gut Buster 3000 has changed him. There was the old Jim. And then there's the new Jim. And the Gut Buster 3000 did the changing.

Well, this morning, we're going to look at a passage in Ephesians that talks about our old self, who we were before we became Christians. And then it's going to point us to the new self, who you are now in Christ.

And the big difference between the two is not a Gut Buster 3000. It's the resurrected Christ who made us new creations.

[2:45] And so would you open up your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4. We're going to look at verses 17 through 24. This is a wonderful passage.

And what it is, it's setting up to help us as Christians to know how to walk as Christians. How to live out our calling in Christ.

So let me read this. Now this, I say and testify in the Lord, 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 the hardness of their heart.

But they have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that's not the way you learn Christ.

[3:45] Assuming that you've 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 these 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.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, You've got to think of yourself as you truly are.

A new creation in Christ. Your old self is history. Your new self in Christ is the present reality.

You have a new identity in Christ. You're not who you used to be. Now, knowing and believing what God says to be true of you in Christ will change the way you live your life.

Who you are determines how you live. And so this morning, I want to help you from this passage, see who you are.

[5:11] So three moves this morning. The old you, the new you, and the need to renew.

So the old you, the new you, and the need to renew. You must believe what God's Word says is true of you.

You're a new creation in Christ Jesus, and it changes the way you live your life. So, the old you. The old you.

Now, I have a little warning in front of this. This is going to be a little bleak. And so, to be faithful to the text is to show you some things about yourself that you may not necessarily like to see.

And so, little warning ahead of time. Unless sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet. And so, we're going to be reminded of some things right now that you may say, that's hard to hear.

[6:20] Well, in verse 22, our Lord Jesus, through the Apostle Paul, tells us to put off the old self. To put it off.

So, we've got to ask the question, who is the old self? Verse 22 says, put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life, and is corrupt through deceitful desires.

The old self, the old you, is who you were, former manner of life, before you became a Christian. That's the old self.

And notice, that the former you, is corrupt through deceitful desires. Who you were before becoming a Christian, was corrupt.

The word corrupt, is describing the nature, of our old self, before Christ. And Paul, is not painting a pretty picture here.

[7:35] What he's actually saying is this, not only were we corrupt, we were moving from bad to worse. We were becoming more and more corrupt.

We were on a disintegrating descent towards destruction. We were dead to God, and decaying morally.

Ephesians 2, 1-3. The old self is the non-Christian you, walking in darkness. Now let's press into this a little bit more.

If you would look at Ephesians 4, 17-19, God wants us to understand what we've been called out of. Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.

Those Gentiles who didn't believe in Christ. Don't walk like them, 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.

[8:44] They've become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. What we read in Ephesians 4, 17-19 is a description of the nature and practice of non-Christians.

Of those separated from the life of God in Christ. And this is a description of our former way of living. This is who we used to be.

Our old non-Christian selves. You see in that passage in verse 17, in the futility of their minds, our thinking was empty, hollow, without substance.

Now back in the day, we would never have said that. We probably thought we were on target.

Thinking the right thoughts. We know what reality was. But we were actually futile in our thinking.

We didn't know the truth, nor did we have the ability to comprehend it. And so what we see in verse 17 when we're talking about the futility of the mind is an emphasis on your mind.

[10:00] We were darkened in our understanding. Verse 18. Again, another word. Understanding referencing the importance of the mind. The lights of our understanding were off towards God.

We were blind to recognizing the light of the knowledge of Christ. We were futile in our thinking. We were darkened in our understanding. And we were alienated from the life of God in Christ Jesus because of the ignorance that was in us. Again, ignorance.

Another reference to the mind. What were we ignorant of? What were we ignorant of? We were ignorant of the truth that is in Christ Jesus.

We did not know God. We were not in a life-giving relationship with the resurrected Christ. Our ignorance of Christ was essentially a rejection of Christ.

[11:11] And mind you, this is not an innocent ignorance, but a culpable rejection of Christ, which demonstrates the fact that we were separated from the life of God.

We were dead to God. We were futile in our thinking. We were darkened in our understanding. We were alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance in us.

And then we get to the heart of the matter. Paul brings us to the cause of it all. You see that at the end of verse 18. Due to their hardness of heart, we were hardened to God.

Our futility of mind, our darkened understanding, our ignorance and alienation was all a result of our hardened hearts. Remember, your heart is the control center of your life.

What controls your heart controls your life. What controls your heart controls what you live for, how you walk through your days. And back before we were Christians, our hearts were hardened towards God.

[12:30] Now, not all of us had the same degree of hardness. We are on varying degrees of hardness to God, but we are all hardening towards God. We didn't live for Christ.

We lived for our own pleasures. This was our nature. This is who we were apart from Christ. That's who we used to be.

This is a picture of our old self. And just to be absolutely clear, God places the blame for our futility of thinking, darkened understanding, alienation and ignorance, squarely on our hardened hearts.

We're responsible. He holds us responsible for our corrupt natures. sinners. This was who we were by nature.

And remember, who you are determines how you live. So our corrupt nature worked its way out into practice.

[13:41] And we see that in verse 19. 19. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

Callous. It's another way of talking about a hardened heart. You know, when you're working outside or doing something a lot with your hands, you get calluses on your hands.

And what they end up doing is they keep you from feeling pain. They make you unfeeling, numb you to pain.

And what Paul is saying here is that a callous heart is numb to God and His ways. And so out of a callous heart, people, formerly ourselves, to varying degrees, gave ourselves up to sensuality.

Giving ourselves over to the godless pursuit of sensual pleasures. Without God on the scene, we're still going to pursue something to make us happy. It's the law of diminishing returns played out in morality.

[14:57] Maybe you've experienced this. Maybe you know other people who've experienced this. When someone has a heart that's hardening towards God, they'll seek pleasure apart from God.

They'll pursue satisfaction somewhere else. Somewhere where God forbids. And over time, that gets old. And so you look for another kind of fix.

And instead of repenting, you move deeper down in. You fall further into the disintegrating descent of decay towards destruction.

That's the practice. That's the lifestyle of those apart from Christ. You move from bad to worse because your heart is hardened to God. It's not static.

It's dynamic. It's regressive. Now, not all of us were in the same place when God graciously intervened in our lives.

[16:04] Some of us were just getting started down the descent of decay. Others of us were well down that slippery slide. But the point you need to see here is that the descending into moral decay was because of who we were.

dead to God, alienated from the life of Christ. We see this being played out. Who you are determines how you live. We see it here in the first part of 17 through 19.

Now, would you look back at verse 17? We read this. Now this I say in testifying to the Lord. Paul is saying, listen to me as your apostle. Now this I say in testifying to the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.

We are no longer to live this way. Why? Because it's not who we are anymore. God through Christ has changed our very nature.

And because He's done that, we have a new way to live. So we've looked at the old self. The old you. Now let's look at the new you.

[17:21] Let's look at what God has done through Christ in you. He's given you a new nature. Verse 24. And put on the new self, created after the likeness of God and true righteousness in holiness.

Well, we just got done looking at the nature and practice of the old you. Now we're going to bear in on the nature of the new you. Who we are now in Christ.

And so, in verse 24, you see the word created. Created and put on Him. Put on the new self.

Created after the likeness of God and true righteousness and holiness.

Think new creation. A new creation created by God in the likeness of God. Would you flip over to Ephesians 2.10? For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.

God made us alive in Christ. Ephesians 2.5. He made us alive in Christ in order to be like Christ. In true righteousness and holiness.

[18:39] And this gracious act of God in which He made you alive was a decisive act of God. There once was a time when you were dead in your sin. God intervened and then you were alive in Christ.

It was a decisive moment in your life. The new self is who you are now in Christ. Redeemed. Made new. Indwelt by the Spirit. You've been given a new nature in Christ. We are a new people now. Claimed by Jesus.

Now let me just do some truth in advertising right here. Because there can be some misunderstanding. When we are made new in Christ, God does not eradicate from our experience our sinful nature.

He doesn't completely eradicate it. So though we have been made new, we are going to have an inclination still to do things according to our former way of life. But we have a new desire now through what Christ has done.

[19:46] Look at verses 20 and 21. But this is not the way we learn Christ, assuming that you've heard about Him and were taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus.

Paul has just said we are not to live like non-Christians. Who they are determines how they lived. But we have come to know Christ. We've learned Christ.

And so our former manner of life stands in sharp contrast to the way we were to live. Stands in sharp contrast to the way we live now.

Because we've been fundamentally changed. Jesus has made us new people. Notice, there's a shift in this passage.

So 17, 18, and 19 is focused on the old man, nature, and practice. And then in verse 20, there's that little word, but. It's a change of direction.

[20:45] It's a change of focus. It's a movement away from looking at who we were to looking at Christ who has made us new.

Christ calls us to a dramatic change in how we live our lives. And we're not to live like non-Christians anymore because they were dead to God.

Now we live as those who are alive to God. It changes the way we live. We were hardened to God, verse 18, and then God gave us new hearts.

There's something I need to point you to. This is, this is wonderful. Would you turn back in your Bibles to the book of Ezekiel? Ezekiel was a prophet.

And in Ezekiel chapter 36, there is a prophecy pointing to what life would be like for God's people under the new covenant when Messiah would come and by His blood establish a new people.

[21:58] Here's what they will be like. Chapter 36, verses 25-27. I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

Old man gone. And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh.

I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful and be careful to obey all my rules. What we see here in Ephesians chapter 4 is the fulfilling of Ezekiel 36.

Jesus accomplished something on the cross. He purchased for Himself a new people. In a new way His people live. A new nature for His people.

We were hardened to God but God through Christ gave us new hearts. When you became a Christian you were given a heart transplant.

[23:09] Your heart of stone was removed and God graciously gave you a new soft heart.

The hard and callous heart gone. And in its place a soft heart. A fleshy heart. Malleable. Tender towards the Lord.

Inclined to His ways. Our hardened hearts before we were Christians made us futile in our thinking. Darkened in our understanding. Alienated because of our ignorance.

And what God did through Christ is that when He gave us a new heart our darkened understanding was enlightened by the light of the knowledge of Christ. Our empty thinking was given substance. Christ. Who He is. What He's done. What He's doing now. And what He will do. God is uniting all things in Christ.

[24:12] Our alienation due to our ignorance became our reconciliation due to our knowledge of Christ. He is our life.

He is our peace. When we became Christians we were given new hearts made new so that we would be able to see the truth that is in Jesus.

Verse 21 He made us new so that we could walk in His ways. This is the new you in Christ. This is who you really truly are right now if you're a Christian.

And if you're not a Christian you need to become a Christian. you need to turn from your old ways and turn to Christ who will give you life.

This is true of you. You are no longer the old you the old self. Christ has made you new. This is the truth that is in Christ.

[25:26] The old is gone the new has come. So we've looked at the old you we've been looking at the new you in Christ and then let's look at this word renew.

Look back with me in verse 20. But that is not the way you learn 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.

Look again at verse 23. And to be renewed in the spirit of your minds. Alright. Let's be honest.

We forget. We forget who we are. We forget that God in Christ has radically changed us.

We forget that. It escapes our minds. We forget who we are. And often times what that leads is to living doing things corrupt behavior that's more in keeping with our former manner of life than who we are right now.

[26:51] So the question becomes how do we live in light of who God in Christ has made us to be? And the answer is right here. It begins by renewing our minds. It begins by remembering who we are in Christ.

This is the starting point of Christian practice. We've just looked at who we are by nature. The new you.

Now we're starting to move towards what that looks like lived out. And it starts with your mind.

Remembering what God has done for you in Christ.

We must regularly renew our minds on the truth of who God in Christ has made us to be. It's got to be regular. It's got to be regular. We've got to call it to mind.

When we renew our minds on the truth of who we are, God gives us resolve to live for Christ. It's his chosen means to do it.

[27:52] Truth functioning in our minds. Minds that have been awakened enlivened. Now we are able to know who we are and live.

Has anybody seen The Help? Great movie. I really enjoyed The Help. There were several scenes that I just thought were particularly well done.

Minnie's chocolate pie, I will never forget that. I think that's incredibly funny. But the one who steals the show is Abilene. So she's an African American slave, not a slave, maid, functioning like a slave. Abilene was a black maid and she was essentially raising May Mobley in the South during the 1960s. And one of the scenes is Abilene sitting in a rocker with May Mobley in her lap.

May Mobley just is woken up and this little white girl who she's essentially raising, she says this to. You remember? You is smart.

[29:03] You is kind. You is important. Remember that? Remember what Abilene had May Mobley do? Repeat after me.

You is smart. You is kind. You is important. And throughout the movie, every time Abilene gets May Mobley to wake her up, you is smart.

You is kind. You is important. When May Mobley makes a big mistake, Abilene brings her in and says, You is smart.

You is kind. You is important. Over and over, Abilene is reminding this little girl of who she is. this is who you are. Christian, God is saying to you, You is mine.

[30:11] You is alive. You is holy. You is mine. You is alive.

You is holy. And this is true regardless of how you feel. You is mine.

You is alive. You is holy. Just think, every morning, you wake up, you open up God's Word, and you renew your mind on the truth that God speaks to you.

You is mine. Love from eternity past. You is alive. I made you alive in Christ. You're a new creation now. You is holy.

Created in the likeness of God for true righteousness and holiness. That's who you are now. When these words of our God sink into our mind, they renew our mind.

[31:15] Yes, that's who I am. They strengthen our resolve to live in light of who we already are. Who God has made us to be.

And so, we look at verse 22 and we read this. Put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires and be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new self.

Put off, renew, put on. Paul is pointing us to the practice of a Christian. Of someone who is made new in Christ.

So what he's saying is this, is we are to put off the practices that are former way of life practices. It's not true of us anymore. We're to put those off and we're to put on practices that are consistent with being created in the likeness of God and true righteousness and holiness.

Paul's actually comparing the Christian life to putting off dirty clothes and putting on clean clothes. And we're going to come back to that for the next several weeks.

[32:30] Because in Ephesians 4 what Paul does is he starts us in a direction. Christian, this is who you are. this is how you must think and this is how it gets really concrete.

Just look at verse 25. You're not to speak falsehood anymore. You're to speak the truth to one another. And so why?

Speaking falsehood is not true of who we are anymore. We've been made new. And so we speak the truth in love to one another. We're going to come back to this over and over for the next few weeks.

Putting off the old self and putting on the new self. Alright. Christ changes the way we live.

Because Christ has changed who we are. Who you are determines how you live. And Christian, you is God's.

[33:40] You is alive. You is holy. Let's pray.