

I suppose the title of the sermon speaks for itself!

How do you live like a new man?

What does it mean to live the Christian life?

**1. No Longer Walk as the Gentiles (4:17-19)**

*17 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.*

*18 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.*

Remember that Ephesians is written to a largely Gentile congregation.

The whole point of chapters 1-3 is that Gentiles and Jews have been united  
in one new man in Christ Jesus.

There is a new humanity in Christ.

And this new humanity has a different way of life –

or to use the path language so common to scripture,  
a different walk.

What is the problem of the Gentile walk?

Paul describes this in terms of knowledge:

“the futility of their minds”

“darkened in their understanding”

“alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them,  
due to their hardness of heart.”

The Gentiles have a knowledge problem.

They do not know God!

They are alienated from the life of God because of ignorance.

But notice that their knowledge problem is rooted in a heart problem.

Their ignorance is due to their hardness of heart.

Let's think about what this means:

the problem with the nations is an intellectual problem –  
it is an epistemological problem.

Epistemology is the study of how we know.

The Gentiles are darkened in their understanding.

Their minds are characterized by futility.

At first this may seem like a strange thing to say.

Unbelievers are often *far* smarter than believers.

In terms of advances in science and technology,  
unbelievers have frequently been in the lead.

So when we speak of the futility of their minds we are not saying that they are stupid.

Cornelius Van Til used to compare the unregenerate mind to a table saw.

It is sharp – it works very well at cutting wood.

The problem is not with the blade.

The problem is that the blade is set at the wrong angle.

If you are trying to make a table,

and the blade is set at 74\* instead of 90\*,

then every cut you make will only make things worse.

This is why Paul locates humanity's problem in the heart.

Our fundamental problem is hardness of heart.

Our intellectual problem, at its root, is because we do not love God –

we do not worship him as God.

And therefore, verse 19 follows:

*19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality,  
greedy to practice every kind of impurity.*

The nations have hardened their hearts – and so they have become callous.

They have callouses on their hearts,

and so they have given themselves up to sensuality.

Sensuality refers to the indulgence of the senses.

Any vice can be included in this.

When your heart is hardened, and you become calloused in your attitude towards God,  
then you will give yourself to indulge your senses.

After all, you were created to love and worship God.

God made you to glorify and enjoy him.

But if your heart is set at the wrong angle,

then you will still love and worship something.

You will still glorify and enjoy something.

You *are* a worshiper.

And you *will* worship.

But if you do not worship the living and true God,

then you will worship something else –

and you become *greedy to practice every kind of impurity.*

That is what Gentiles do.  
That is what *everyone* does apart from Christ.

## **2. Because You Have a New Identity (4:20-24)**

*20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!—*

You did not learn Christ so that you could continue living like Gentiles!

How does Paul know?

Because he spent three years in Ephesus!

I know that I did not teach you that you could continue living like Gentiles!

And so there is a certain incredulous tone in verse 21:

*21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,*

It is true, I taught you that you did not have to become Jews.

It is true, you do not need to observe the Mosaic Law.

You do not need to be circumcised.

You do not need to keep Kosher.

You should not be living like Jews.

You should not be living like Gentiles.

You are a third race.

You are a new humanity.

The truth, as it is in Jesus, is that God has formed one new man out of the two,  
and so you are now one body in Christ.

Verses 20-24 also use a lot of “knowledge” language.

A Christian is a “learner” a disciple – one who is being taught the truth as it is in Jesus.

Anyone who downplays the intellectual content of the Christian faith  
is missing a central point of Paul’s teaching.

And Paul says that *the* centerpiece of the Christian faith is “learning Christ” –  
coming to learn the truth “as it is in Jesus.”

And this truth is nothing less than the truth of our union with Christ.

And this truth, as it is in Jesus, is

*22 to put off your old self,*

*which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,*

*23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,*

24 and to put on the new self,  
created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

We have seen over and over again throughout Paul's epistles  
that the old man is dead – that we *have* put off the old self.

Is Paul now saying that the Christian must put off his old self?

Look back to the grammar of the passage:

the ESV does an admirable job of following Paul's lengthy sentence!

Verses 20-24 is all one sentence.

The two main verbs are “you heard” and “you were taught” (verse 21).

What did you hear?

What were you taught?

To put off your old self (v22)

and to be renewed (v23)

and to put on the new man (v24).

Paul is not saying that the Ephesians need to put off the old self

(unless in fact, they did *not* learn what he taught them the first time!).

Rather, they need to *remember* what is *already* true.

They need to remember the truth that they learned, as it is in Jesus.

The reason why you cannot live like a Gentile anymore

is because your old Gentile self is dead.

Your old self *belongs to your former manner of life*

*and it is corrupt through deceitful desires.*

You cannot go back to it!

It is corrupt.

This is the same word that we saw this morning from Genesis 6.

The Greek language – like the Hebrew –

has a word that can mean both “corrupt” and “destroy.”

Paul here uses that word, showing us that the same corrupting power,

the same self-destructive agenda that dominated the ancient world

is still at work in the old man.

And while the old man is dead,

our desires are still deceitful.

Sin remains just as corrupting – just as self-destructive as ever.

But that is why Paul emphasizes the fact that you have been *renewed in the spirit of your minds.*

This has nothing to do with whether you understand what God has done.

The spirit of your mind has been renewed.  
The saw has been restored to its proper setting.

That's why Paul adds that you have *put on the new self,*  
*created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

The truth as it is in Jesus is that you have a new identity.  
You have been recreated after the likeness of God.

You are no longer a Gentile.  
You are no longer a Jew.  
You are in Christ.

Therefore, act like it.

### **3. Therefore Act Like It (4:25-29)**

*25 Therefore, having put away falsehood,*  
*let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor,*  
*for we are members one of another.*

We saw earlier in chapter 4 the importance of speaking the truth in love.  
The body of Christ needs to be characterized by speaking the truth with one another.

Let me make a couple things clear:

Speaking truth with one another does *not* mean  
making sure that everyone else knows exactly how I feel about them!  
Neither does it mean  
telling everyone else what they are doing wrong!

After all, that certainly does not qualify as love –  
and I'm not even sure that it qualifies as truth!  
-- as the truth is in Jesus!

What does it mean to speak the truth with your neighbor?

First, it means to speak the truth with your fellow Christian  
(that's the importance of the phrase "for we are members one of another").

This doesn't mean that you can lie to unbelievers –  
but rather there are some things

that you won't bother saying to an unbeliever  
simply because they won't get it.

For instance, telling your unbelieving neighbors  
that they shouldn't be so preoccupied with sports  
is probably a waste of time.

It's true – but it isn't necessary.

But calling your Christian brother to beware of his idolatry –  
that could be an example of speaking truth with your neighbor.

When you see one another falling into sensuality –  
the indulgence of the senses –  
you need to say something  
because of the truth as it is in Jesus  
Because you have put off the old man with its passions and desires,  
and you have put on the new man.

Falsehood is not just an intellectual problem.  
Falsehood is a worship problem.  
So when someone believes a lie  
it is not just a minor inconvenience,  
it is not a mere peccadillo.

And you cannot excuse yourself by saying,  
“oh, well, it’s none of my business!”  
It is your business.  
Because you are one body with this person.  
We are members one of another.

If you don’t say anything, it will only get worse.  
If you love God, you will say something.  
If you love your brother, you will say something.

The only reason why you wouldn’t say anything  
is because you don’t really care.  
The only reason why you wouldn’t say anything  
is because *you* are more interested in your own selfish indulgence.

Ouch.

I just described myself.

I have not loved you enough to speak the truth.  
I have preferred to speak in vague generalities to speaking truth in love.

*26 Be angry and do not sin;  
do not let the sun go down on your anger,  
27 and give no opportunity to the devil.*

There is nothing inherently wrong with anger.  
But do not let your anger control you.  
Just because you are angry does not mean that you have to sin!

You may be angry because someone else did something stupid.  
So?

What are you going to do about it?  
“Be angry and do not sin.”

This is a quotation from Psalm 4:4.  
Paul recognizes that anger is chiefly about power.  
When I feel out of control, I get angry.  
When something disrupts ‘my kingdom,’  
then prepare to feel my wrath!  
Is that what goes on inside you?

Paul recognizes that the solution to anger  
is found in acknowledging who is truly in control!

Psalm 4 is all about the proper response to anger.

Cry out to the Lord,  
“How long, O Lord, faithful and true!  
How long will injustice prevail upon the earth!”  
Is that how you respond when someone makes you angry?

Psalm 4:3 says “But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself;  
the LORD hears when I call to him.”

If you have a problem with anger,  
I challenge you to find a Psalm with the “how long” theme,  
Psalm 4, Psalm 9, Psalm 10, Psalm 13, Psalm 90 – or many others,  
and find a few verses that remind you who is in control.

And when the fit seizes you, call upon the LORD.  
It is awfully hard to sin when you are calling upon his name.

You can see the same sort of principle in verses 28-29 as well:

*28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor,  
doing honest work with his own hands,  
so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.*

It is not enough for the thief to avoid stealing.  
The thief must labor and do honest work so that he may share with those in need.

Notice that Paul does not focus on retributive justice here.  
I think that it is safe to say that Paul would endorse Zaccheus’s offer  
to repay fourfold anyone that he had cheated.  
But here he focuses on Zaccheus’s other offer:  
to give half his goods to the poor.

The focus here is not on the particular people who were wronged,  
but on the heart and walk of the offender.  
The thief is one who is preoccupied with “getting” stuff –  
and particularly, getting stuff that does not rightly belong to him.  
True repentance – a true change of heart and of mind –  
will result in the sort of person who loves to work,  
not so that he might get stuff,  
but so that he might give stuff.

We need to be careful about this one!  
In our culture, we look at the poor  
and we urge them to work hard, so that they can become like us!

Why?

We have so much stuff, we don’t know what to do with it all!  
When Paul says that the penitent thief  
should be focused on sharing with those in need,  
he is not excluding us from that call.  
Indeed, he is assuming that we are *already* that way!

What is your attitude toward “stuff”?  
One wise reformed pastor suggested that each family  
divide “stuff” into three categories:  
necessities, conveniences, and luxuries.  
After you have covered the necessities of life  
(modest food, clothing, and housing),  
for every dollar you spend on conveniences,  
you should give a dollar to the poor.

What about luxuries, you might ask?

Oh, he would say, there is no place in the Christian life for those!  
If we have food and clothing we will be content with these.

Luxuries, by definition, are an indulgence of the flesh.  
Definitions of the word point out that luxury  
is all about excess and indulgence.

We live in an age when conveniences have become necessities  
(could anyone really live without a television or a microwave?)  
and luxuries have become conveniences.

How many of us actually *think* that we work hard so that we might have enough to share?



No, we think that we work hard so that we can provide for our families.  
Provide what?

Necessities?  
Conveniences?

Maybe you and I need to rethink the way we approach our finances –  
indeed our whole attitude towards life!

Michiana Covenant has a remarkable track record when it comes to giving.

I don't know what everyone makes.

But if you go through the church directory and make a vague ballpark guess,  
and divide by 10, you will wind up with something  
very much like the church budget.

And there is another 1% that is going to the deacon's fund.

And I hope that those of you who have money for conveniences  
are also supporting other institutions that help the poor  
(food banks, homeless shelters, homes for single mothers,  
scholarship funds for poor students, missionaries, etc.)

Paul's point is that the repentant thief is supposed to think Christianly about his money.

And

*29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths,  
but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion,  
that it may give grace to those who hear.*

Paul returns again to the way we speak.  
How we talk is crucial to everything else.

Do your words give grace to those who hear?  
Do your words fit the occasion?  
Are your words edifying?

Or is your speech rotten?  
That's what the word "corrupting" means here.

In a bushel of apples, it only takes one rotten apple to corrupt the whole bushel.

How does it work?

The rotten apple presses up against a good apple,  
and quickly the rot is transmitted.

Even so, rotten speech quickly transmits corruption from one to another.

Rotten speech cannot give grace to others.  
Rather, it transmits decay.

Gracious speech brings healing to the bones.

Wise counsel restores health.

#### **4. And Do Not Grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30-32)**

There have been a lot of Trinitarian passages in Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:3-14 speaks of how we were predestined (in Christ) by the Father,  
redeemed (in Christ) by the blood of the Beloved Son,  
and sealed (in Christ) with the promised Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:17 summarized all this in Paul's prayer

“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,  
may give to you a Spirit of wisdom and of revelation.”

Ephesians 2:11-18 then showed us that we have access to God the Father  
through the blood of Christ, and through him in one Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19-22 then told us that Christ is the cornerstone of the new temple of God  
which we are being built into ... by the Spirit!

Ephesians 4 then began with a Trinitarian statement of the unity of the body.

There is one body and one Spirit...

One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

One God and Father of all... (4:4-6)

Then in the center of chapter 4, Paul showed us how Christ is building us into one body,  
and he now concludes with a Trinitarian description of the Christian life:

*30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,*

*by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

*31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you,  
along with all malice.*

*32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,  
as God in Christ forgave you.*

You have been sealed by the Holy Spirit of God for the day of redemption.

This is what baptism means.

In baptism God has put his name on you.

Remember that in any sacrament there are two parts:

the outward sign and the inward reality.

The outward sign of baptism is water.

The inward reality is the sealing of the Spirit.

As the water marks you externally, the Spirit marks you internally.

Paul will deal in other places with apostates and hypocrites.

Here he is speaking to the church – to the body of Christ,  
to those present in the congregation.

You were sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (the resurrection),

therefore do not grieve the Holy Spirit.

How could you grieve the Holy Spirit?

Through bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander – oh, and malice as well.

Bitterness against others implies bitterness against God.

If you love God, you will not be bitter against others.

If you worship God, then there will be no place for malice or wrath in your heart!

Notice again how much of Paul's emphasis is on the tongue:

clamor (angry speech) and slander (malicious speech).

Paul seems to recognize that one of the chief ways that we grieve the Holy Spirit is through what we say.

What is the solution?

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.

It almost sounds like a he's saying, "hey, let's just all get along!"

Until you get to the last phrase,  
*as God in Christ forgave you.*

Imitation is rooted in participation.

We can only imitate "God in Christ"

because of what "God in Christ" *did* in history.

It is only because of the cross – it is only because of the resurrection of Jesus –  
that this call to be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving  
has any meaning or any power!

What does it mean to be kind?

I can assure you that it has nothing whatsoever to do with being "nice."

Niceness puts on a smile whatever the circumstances.

Niceness is syrupy sweet.

Kindness, on the other hand, is revealed in the cross.

Tenderheartedness (literally, healthy bowels)

is what we see in God in Christ.

Kindness, tenderheartedness –

these things are not *passive*.

They are demonstrated for us in the cross of Jesus.

And therefore we are to forgive one another

as God in Christ forgave you.

This is not the word used to speak of a judicial forgiveness.

It is the verbal form of the noun “grace.”

It means “to grace” someone with something.

It is the word used in Romans 8:32 when Paul says that God did not spare his own Son,  
but gave him up for us all,

will he not also, with him, *graciously give* us all things.

Paul normally uses this word to speak of what God has given Christ

(Phil 2:9, he has “graced” Jesus with the name that is above every name)

or to speak of the gracious gifts that God has given us in Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 2, he uses it several times to speak of how the Corinthians

should deal graciously with the penitent sinner (usually translated “forgive him”).

The point here is *not* about the *transaction* of forgiveness.

The situation is *not* that your brother has sinned against you,  
and now is asking you to forgive him.

After all, that is *not* what God (in Christ) has done for us!

The situation is that your brother has sinned against you

and *doesn't seem to care*.

What should you do?

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, dealing graciously with one another,  
as God in Christ dealt graciously with you.

“Gracing one another as God in Christ has graced you.”

It is not just about forgiveness.

Of course you forgive him when he repents!

That's obvious!

Because *long before he repented* you had the same attitude towards him  
that God in Christ has toward you!