**“PUT OFF YOUR OLD SELF, PUT ON THE NEW SELF”**

**Ephesians 4:17-32**

This morning in our study of Ephesians we’re going to be looking at some specific principles of conduct – how God expects us, His church, as believers in Jesus Christ, to live. The first 3 chapters have been mostly theology, specifically concerning the church. We’ve noted so far that God has a plan and purpose for us, the church. He has a mission for us, a “calling.” And He has empowered us and given us many resources to carry out that mission. And one of those resources, which we mentioned last week, is each other. Unity in the “body of Christ” (Paul’s term for the church), has been a key theme in our study so far.

And as you read thru Ephesians and the rest of the N.T. you can’t help but notice that we Christians are different from the rest of the world. Not surprising. Listen to some of the language used by the N.T. writers about us:

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession [KJV says, a peculiar people]… and here is our mission… “that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

“…a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:14)

God the Father chose us “before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.” (Eph 1:4)

The elect… “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.” (1 Peter 1:2)

“that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,” (Phil 2:15)

“You are the salt of the earth… You are the light of the world.” (Matt 5:13-14)

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind…” (Rom 12:2)

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Cor 5:17)

“you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood…” (1 Peter 2:5) Eph 2:20-22

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own” (1 Cor 6:19)

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:10)

“Do not love the world or the things in the world…” (1 Jn 2:15)

“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” (Col 3:2)

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness…” (Matt 6:33)

“looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith…” (Heb 12:2)

“…for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:28)

So clearly there is something uniquely different about us Christians. No question about that! We stand out from the vast majority of people in the world, those apart from Christ (or we should). Clearly as you read the Bible God views those of us who make up His church as being different, unique, set apart.

When I was a kid in school right after I got saved, I began to feel this tension between how I knew God wanted me to behave now that I was saved and, on the other hand, wanting to be accepted by my friends. That tension never really went away, though the older I got the less I cared what other people thought of me. I still don’t want to be thought of as being weird. But the fact is if we are living our lives the way Christ wants us to, we’re going to be considered by some as strange, abnormal, different. And that’s OK.

I’m going to go ahead and read our passage. Let me just tell you right up front -- nothing you’re going to see here is new. You know all this, but sometimes we just need to be reminded. Forgetful creatures that we are.

READ Ephesians 4:17-24

In v 17 Paul says, “What I am about to say comes from God – the Lord told me to tell you this…” And what message does Paul deliver?

“that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do…” In other words, as the unsaved people around you, as those who are apart from Christ. The fact is that most of the Ephesian Christians back then were and those of us in this room this morning are Gentiles. The Ephesian Christians for the most part were saved as adults. They had lived their entire lives in a pagan, idolatrous environment steeped in gross immorality. Most of us, not all, were fortunate to be raised in a Christian environment. But nonetheless we were and still are surrounded by many lost people who don’t live godly lives. The airwaves are filled with the godless agenda. Bottom line, Paul says, “Don’t live like you used to -- before you were saved.”

Paul reminds us of several characteristics of unsaved people. These represent characteristics that, now that we’ve embraced Christ, should no longer be a part of us. This is the way lost people think. It’s the way they are. They can’t help it.

V 17 “in the futility of their minds.” The rational thought processes of an unsaved person are distorted by sin and the result is that lost people are basically self-centered.

In v 18, “They are darkened in their understanding,” Earlier in Ephesians Paul described lost people as spiritually dead. They do not have godly understanding. In 2 Cor 4:4 Paul says that “Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are UNABLE to see the glorious light of the Good News.”

The minds of unsaved people are distorted by sin and blinded by Satan. They may intellectually be very smart, but they are unable to understand spiritual truths. The things of God make no sense to them. V 18, They are “alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them.” They’re ignorant of the truth.

Just a reminder, this was us before we got saved.

V 18, “due to their hardness of heart.” Not only are their minds distorted by sin. Not only is Satan blinding them. Not only are they ignorant of the truth. But on top of all that, what little light they do have they willfully reject. They see all that stuff about Jesus and how He loves them and wants to save them as foolishness or just a big waste of time.

In v 19 Paul says, “They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.” This is the life of an unregenerate lost person, running along the path of sin and headed for destruction. Paul paints a pretty bleak picture of a person’s mindset before they are saved.

When you read this the thought may cross your mind, “So how does such a person ever get saved?” Well, it takes divine intervention. The Holy Spirit must convict them of their sin and of righteousness and judgment. And only then will they be able to respond in faith and believe. Remember, that’s what happened to you way back when. It took a miracle of God!

So that was your old way of life. That was you back then. In v 20-21 Paul shifts gears. “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,” Paul says, “but that’s not you any more if you indeed you have come to Christ. Something happened that altered the course of your life – you learned the truth about Jesus.” You got saved. And it changed your entire destiny. It changed you. And so now Paul shifts his focus away from the OLD you to the NEW you.

V 22-24 “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires [what he just described], 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.”

So here Paul contrasts our new self in Christ to our old self apart from Christ. The language Paul uses of “putting off” the old and “putting on” the new implies that we must do something. There is some action involved on our part. Now, you all know me. I’m big on the sovereignty of God and I see a lot of things in life as ordained by God. However, clearly the Bible teaches that we make choices. We exercise our own will to do what we want to do. And this part of Ephesians emphasizes this.

How do we put off our old self and put on the new self? V 23, “be renewed in the spirit of your minds.” This gets back to the heart of Paul’s prayer in Eph 3 that we “may be filled with all the fullness of God.” We willfully, daily, submit, we turn over control of, our mind, our will, our emotions, our ambitions, our plans, our life to the Holy Spirit. It is a conscious effort on our part. It’s a spiritual discipline. It involves spending time in His word and spending time in prayer. Worship, confession of sin, bringing our petitions before God. It’s a daily action. It’s something we must do all the time. And why? Because our old self, our sin nature is grabbing at the steering wheel of our life and trying to seize control. It’s a battle!

That last phrase in v 24, “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” describes Jesus. When Jesus was here in the flesh He showed us the likeness of God. Jesus told Philip in John 14:9, “Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father.” His life was truly righteous and holy. Bottom line, we need to be like Jesus. This is the whole concept of sanctification. The day I got saved I behaved like the old unsaved me. Moving forward in time, fast forward 50 plus years later, I should look less like the old me and more like Jesus. If the sanctification process is working in my life then I should be growing in my faith, know more about Christ, and want to become more like Him.

As I pointed out last week, we don’t do any of this to maintain our salvation or as a requirement for salvation. We do these things motivated by our love for Christ. We want to please Him. [marriage analogy]

Therefore, last part of Eph Ch 4. READ Ephesians 4:25-32…

25 Therefore, having put away falsehood [we don’t lie any more like the rest of the world does], let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor [parable of the Good Samaritan, my neighbor is any person I come in contact with], for we are members one of another [we’re part of the body of Christ].

26 Be angry and do not sin [there are some things we as Christians should be angry about, righteous indignation]; do not let the sun go down on your anger, [unrighteous anger, need to deal with it immediately]

27 and give no opportunity to the devil.

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. [contrasting old you with new you, used to take what didn’t belong to you, now you give away what is yours]

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. [another contrast, the old you would tear someone down, the new you builds them up]

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [more on this in a minute]

31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. [put off your old self]

32 [Instead, this is what you are to do…] Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

[example of Betty, parable of unforgiving servant in Matt 18]

Close with comment on Eph 4:30:

John MacArthur -- “Here the Spirit of God grieves, and what makes Him grieve? What makes Him grieve is when you, as a believer, don’t exchange the old for the new. The Holy Spirit is grieved when He sees lying instead of the truth, when He sees anger instead of forgiveness, when He sees stealing instead of sharing, and when He hears corruption instead of graciousness. And the point that he is making in verse 30 is how could you possibly grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you are sealed till the day of redemption? Now, when we were studying earlier in Ephesians, we studied about the sealing. The idea that I want you to see here is this: when you were saved, the Spirit of God put a stamp on you that said, “This is God’s, this is genuine, this is authentic, and this is forever.”

This lesson today has all been application. No heavy doctrine, just practical words. The question we have to ask ourselves is “How am I doing? Maybe I need to work on this or this.” Nothing I said this morning was new. You’ve heard it all before. Just a reminder of what God wants from us and why.