

**Living In The World As God's Children**  
**Ephesians 4:17-24**

**9-20-09**

There is an old saying that goes "When in Rome, do as the Romans do"

It is an encouragement to conform

If you are among sophisticated people – act like they do

If you are among crude types – behave like them

Above all do not stand out

At least if you want to be successful in this world

You can be sure it wasn't Paul who started this saying

It is opposed to the way of Christ

In the world there is some advantage to acting like everybody else

If people like you may move up the corporate ladder faster

**But in your spiritual life conformity to the world's way is fatal**

That is why Paul tells us in this next section

You must no longer live as the Gentiles do

You have been called out of this world system

**And having been saved for God's purposes**

**You have been called to discipleship and holiness in Christ**

Christ living in you changes everything

You see when a person believes and confesses Jesus Christ as Lord

A transformation takes place in his basic nature

This change in nature is even more radical

Than the change that takes place at death

**When a believer passes away he has already been made fit for heaven**

He simply begins to perfectly experience the divine nature

He has already had since his spiritual birth

**As a believer when you go to be with the Lord**

**The physical body dies the sin nature dies and you pass on into glory**

When you became a Christian it is as though God created a new species

Something that had never existed before came into being

As Christians we have been radically transformed

Death makes that transformation complete

Now in this life we are to live holy lives

Not because morality in itself is good – though it is

Not because it promotes happiness and success – though it does

But because of whose we are and what God has done for us

Martin Lloyd-Jones wrote – Our conduct should always be to us something that is

inevitable in view of what we believe. If my Christian living is not inevitable to me, and

I am always fighting against it, and struggling, and trying to get out of it, and wondering

why it is so hard and narrow, if I find I am still envying the people back in the world,

there is something radically wrong with my Christian life

Today's passage breaks down this way

**The walk of the old self**

**The walk of the new self**

**Let's start with the walk of the old self (READ 17-19)**

The term Gentiles refers here to all unregenerate peoples

Therefore refers back to what Paul has been saying

About our calling

Because we are chosen by God called to salvation

Unified in the body of Christ

Gifted by the Holy Spirit and built up by gifted men

We should walk differently than the world walks

It only makes sense of course

**We cannot accomplish the works of God**

**While continuing to live the same way as the rest of the world**

The writer Heraclitus said Ephesus had morals lower than animals

So the church at Ephesus was a small island of despised people

In a giant cesspool of wickedness

Most of the believers had lived just like the rest of the city

They passed places where they used to practice sinning

They ran into old friends who called them back to their old life

They continually faced temptations to return to their old ways

And Paul speaking for Jesus encouraged them to resist

**I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you no longer walk as the Gentiles walk**

Don't live like you used to

**On the basis of who we are in Christ**

**And all that God has done for us**

**We are to live distinct from the rest of the world**

There should be something about the life of a believer

That causes the world to know we are different

Even if they don't know why

**Spiritually we have already left the world and are now citizens of heaven**

**Therefore we are not to love the world nor the things of the world; for if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father.**

Paul gives us four characteristics of unbelievers

**First unredeemed thinking is intellectually futile**

They are always learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth

They keep striving and planning and getting nowhere

Blessed are those who run around in circles for they shall be known as big wheels – all

of the world is running around in circles

**As far as spiritual and moral issues go unbelievers cannot think right thoughts**

Sin has warped their thinking process

In their book The Criminal Personality, Yochelson and Stanton maintain that criminal behavior is a result of warped thinking

They write – The criminal’s thinking pattern operates everywhere, they are not restricted to crime. It is not the environment that turns a man into a criminal; it is a series of choices he makes starting at a very early age.

They conclude that the criminal mind eventually decides that “everything is worthless”.

The authors conclude with – “His thinking is illogical”.

Now listen carefully – warped thinking doesn’t seem illogical to the criminal

And that is a perfect description of the thinking of unredeemed mankind

Their illogical thinking doesn’t seem illogical to them

They will tell you that it is your thinking that is warped

Remember what Festus said to Paul – Paul, you are out of your mind

When Jackie and I told one of my best friends that we were Christians

His response was – I guess it is a good thing for the kids

His belief was Christianity had no value for those of us who were adults

Our friends’ son told them – he was too educated to be a Christian

That is the thinking of the world

And because man’s sinfulness comes out of his reprobate mind

His transformation must begin with the mind

Christianity is understood before it is experienced

**Before God does a work in the heart He first does a work in the mind**

It is our thinking that causes us to believe the truths of the Gospel

And receive Christ as Lord and Savior

**That is why the first step in repentance is a change of mind**

A change of mind about our behavior and our ability to please God

Paul says the unredeemed mind is futile

The Greek word translated futile means – that which never succeeds

The word is also a synonym for empty because it amounts to nothing

If you think about it Paul is saying that

When it comes to the things of God unredeemed man is empty headed

The natural man resolves every thing on the basis of his own thinking

He is his own ultimate source

And he follows his thinking to its final ultimate outcome of - futility

The wisest man who ever lived concluded that the worldly life

Is vanity and striving after wind

Yet century after century men go on chasing the same futile goals

In the same futile ways – they are incapable of change

**Then the unredeemed are ignorant of God’s truth**

They think they know it all and they actually know nothing

**Because their heart is hard nonbelievers thinking is spiritually uninformed**

They wouldn't accept truth if it was handed to them on a platter

As Jack Nicholson might say – They can't handle the truth

Just like ancient Greece our society prides itself on its knowledge

**But fallen men have an innate inability to comprehend the things of God**

They not only can't comprehend the things of God they fight against Him

Our country spends billions of dollars annually

In a futile attempt to find life on other planets and so prove evolution

Believe me if they find so much as a bacteria

The newspaper headlines will read – God is dead – count on it

Also something is inherently wrong with mankind - they feel guilty

Psychology is a vain attempt to help people live with guilt

Because and I quote “guilt in the human heart is normal”

Leroy Auden wrote – While we may use other terms than guilt to describe this turbulence in our souls, the fact remains that all is not right within us

Now Satan plays a part in men's lack of understanding

Paul writes – **the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the Gospel of Christ**

They refuse to see Christ because they refuse to see God

And their refusal is confirmed and reinforced by the devil

Who they also refuse to believe is real

**When men reject the obvious revelation that God is there**

**They become darkened in their understanding**

**And excluded from the life of God**

That is the tragedy of unbelief

The tragedy of the person who makes himself his own god

**Then the unredeemed are depraved**

They try to ease the pain with alcohol drugs and pleasure

It gives them moments of forgetfulness

**Futile self-centered thinking ignorance of the truth and spiritual callousness lead inevitably to sensuality**

The word translated sensuality means - the absence of all moral restraint

All mankind recognize some standard of right and wrong

And our conscience gives us a sense of shame when we violate the standard

But as people continually break moral laws

They find themselves incapable of living within the standard

So they reject the standard and determine to live by their own standards

People like this don't care what others think – much less what God thinks

They live their lives as though there is no higher accountability

And they will mock and despise those who practice and tell the truth

It happened to Paul in 50AD - it is happening now

**You see when a person determines to think his own way**

**And pursue his own destiny he cuts himself off from God**

When that happens he cuts himself off from truth

And becomes spiritually blind without standards of morality

Immorality becomes a shameless and calloused way of life

And a lifestyle of immorality destroys the mind's ability to distinguish

Good from evil – truth from lies - reality from make believe

**The godless life eventually becomes the mindless life**

That is the direction every ungodly person is headed

Some are just further along the road than others

**There are three reasons the whole world is not completely corrupt**

**God's grace; the preserving influence of the Holy Spirit; and the church**

Some day the church will be gone and the Holy Spirit will be removed

When that occurs this world will make Sodom and Gomorrah seem tame

**So we are not to live like those without faith**

They live in the futility of their minds – they are ignorant of God's truth

They are spiritually and morally calloused and their mind is depraved

Now fortunately Paul doesn't just tell us how not to live

He gives us information as to how we ought to live

**He gives instructions for the walk of the new self (READ 20-24)**

As you might imagine

The new walk in Christ is the opposite of the old walk of the flesh

**The old life is self centered and futile**

**The new walk is Christ centered and purposeful**

The old self was ignorant of God's truth

The new self knows and understands truth

The old is morally calloused and shameless - the new is sensitive to sin

The old is corrupted in its thinking - the new is renewed

After reviewing the evils of the old self life

Paul strongly declares - **You did not learn Christ in this way**

Learning Christ is a direct reference to salvation

Jesus speaking - King James translation – **Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me.**

Taking the yoke of Jesus is the beginning of learning of Jesus

The lesson then lasts through eternity

**Now the redeemed life must of necessity be a changed life**

James tells us that friendship with the world is hostility towards God

Let me tell you

**The person who makes a profession of faith**

**And makes no effort to break with his worldly habits**

**Has reason to doubt the reality of his salvation**

I am not saying that having been saved you should never sin again

However I am saying that if you are comfortable with your sin

You are in deep trouble spiritually

**The ways of the world and the ways of God are not compatible**

Of necessity you must forsake one of them to be involved with the other

From the human perspective salvation begins with repentance

**Repentance is a change of mind and actions regarding sin self and God**

To hold onto sin is to refuse God scorn His grace and nullify faith

Now no Christian is totally freed from the presence of sin in this life

**But in Christ you are freed from your orientation towards sin**

You may slip and fall many times but the determined direction of your life

Is towards God and away from sin and self

Don't let your sin discourage you – that is defeat

Let it make you even more resolved to live for Jesus

One of the first things we as Christians should learn

Is that we cannot trust our own thinking or rely on our own way

It was your thinking and your ways that kept you in sin

But having been saved you have been given the mind of Christ – seek it

**The incarnate Lord Jesus sought the mind of the Father**

**In everything that He did and everything that He said**

How much more should we who were born with a sin nature

Seek the mind of Christ

**The mark of the Christian life is thinking like Christ living like Christ**

**And loving like Christ**

John MacArthur - God has a plan of destiny for the universe, and as long as Christ is working in us, He is working out a part of that plan through us. The Christ centered life is the most purposeful and meaningful life conceivable.

Now the new walk is Christ centered and purposeful

**The new walk is one of knowledge and truth**

Instead of being ignorant of God's truth

The believer has both heard the voice of Christ and been taught in Him

**When a person receives Christ as Savior and Lord, he comes into God's truth**

Life without God leads to cynicism about truth

That is why the world doesn't believe in truth

Pontius Pilate said: What is truth? And he didn't expect Jesus to answer him

But you can say with certainty – the Truth of Christ is in me

John summed it up when he wrote – **1John 5 -We know that the Son of God has**

**come, and given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true,**

**and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and**

**eternal life.**

**Jesus is the Way the Truth and the Life and He is resident within you**

The new walk is Christ centered and purposeful

It is one of knowledge and truth

**The new walk is one of deliverance from the old self and transformation to the new**

## **self**

When Paul tells us to lay aside the old self

It is like he is telling us to not wear that old suit anymore

You don't need it – it doesn't fit – it doesn't become you – burn it

The implication of the verbs used here

Indicates a once for all time action

### **The moment you were saved your old self became a liability**

My parents didn't have much money so I just had one set of shirts

I wore short sleeves in the summer and in the winter

All my life I wore short sleeved shirts all year long

That became a badge of pride for me

Even when I could afford long sleeves I still wore them short

With a sport jacket – with a suit – didn't make any difference

My trademark was short sleeves

Then one day someone who cared pulled me aside

And told me I was hurting my business career by the shirts I wore

He basically said – lay aside the old shirts and put on new ones

I liked my old shirts - short sleeves was who I was

My first instinct was to ignore his advice - but I didn't

I destroyed the old wardrobe and put on the new

That is precisely what Paul is telling us

And some of us are just like my original reaction to good advice

We like our old selves – we don't want to change – it's who we are

But we look think talk and act ugly wearing our old self

You have died to sin and become alive in Christ – live like it

### **Salvation is a spiritual union with Christ in His death and resurrection**

This union and identification with Jesus comes from transformation

You see it is not the addition of the new self to the old self

### **It is the elimination of the self life and living in the newness of Christ's life**

It is not a co-mingling – some of me – some of Christ

### **The invitation is to lay aside the old self and turn from sin to God**

Sometimes the real estate market uses the phrase “fixer-upper”

Meaning that with a little TLC this place could look like new

You were not a fixer-upper – you were in complete disrepair - you were condemned

God didn't slap a coat of paint on you - God started over with you

The word new does not mean renovated or repaired but entirely new

It is the same word we would use to describe a new species

You are no longer the same species as fallen mankind

This isn't your old self cleaned up

When God saved you He didn't take a goat and put lipstick on it

He took a goat and made it a sheep

You were born a son of man but you have been made a son of God

You are completely different than you once were – completely

**And when God made you new – He gave you Himself**

In contrast to the depraved reprobate mind you used to have

You have been given the mind of Christ – you need to begin to use it

Here is the neat part

**You have not only been made new, you are continually being renewed**

This ongoing renewal is the result of putting on the new self

**When you became a Christian God initially made your mind new**

**Giving it a new spiritual and moral capability**

As you die to self and put to death the deeds of the flesh

This renewal then continues throughout your life

We are new but not yet all new

We are righteous and holy but not yet perfectly righteous and holy

Many rescue missions have a delousing room

Men and women who have not had a bath in months

Discard all their old clothes

And are thoroughly bathed and disinfected

The unsalvageable old clothes are burned and new clothes are provided

The clean man is provided clean clothes

That is a picture of salvation

**Except that in salvation the new believer is not simply cleaned up**

**But is given a new nature**

Made a new creation – a new species

The continuing need of the Christian is to keep discarding and burning the remnants of the old sinful nature

**Because of our new life our new Lord our new nature**

**And our new power**

**We are called to live a corresponding new life-style**

Do you ever ask yourself the questions – Who am I - **(READ VS 24)**

That is who you are – a brand new creation

Created in the likeness of God

So that you could live in righteousness holiness and truth

There is a battle going on within Christians

The battle between the old self and the new self

And it's a battle that cannot be won without commitment on your part and without God's power

Start each day mentally taking off the old self with its dead ways

And putting on the new self

Commit to live for God then put on His armor

Commend the day to God

Then go out expecting God to do something great that day

**Living In The World As God's Children**  
**Ephesians 4:17-24**

**9-20-09**

In your spiritual life conformity to the world's way is \_\_\_\_\_  
Having been saved for God's purposes, you have been called to \_\_\_\_\_ and  
holiness in Christ

When a believer passes away he has already been made fit for \_\_\_\_\_  
As a believer when you go to be with the Lord, the physical body dies, the sin nature  
dies and you pass on into \_\_\_\_\_

**The walk of the old self**

We cannot accomplish the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, while continuing to live the same way as the  
rest of the world

On the basis of who we are in Christ, and all that God has done for us, we are to \_\_\_\_\_  
absolutely distinct from the rest of the world

Spiritually we have already left the world, and are now citizens of \_\_\_\_\_

Unredeemed thinking is intellectually \_\_\_\_\_

As far as spiritual and \_\_\_\_\_ issues go unbelievers cannot think right thoughts

Before God does a work in the heart He first does a work in the \_\_\_\_\_

The first step in repentance is a \_\_\_\_\_ of mind

The unredeemed are ignorant of God's \_\_\_\_\_

The nonbelievers \_\_\_\_\_ is spiritually uninformed

Fallen men have an innate inability to comprehend the things of \_\_\_\_\_

When men reject the obvious revelation that God is there, they become darkened in their  
understanding and excluded from the \_\_\_\_\_ of God

The unredeemed are \_\_\_\_\_

Futile self-centered thinking, ignorance of the truth and spiritual callousness lead  
inevitably to \_\_\_\_\_

When a person determines to think his \_\_\_\_\_ way and pursue his \_\_\_\_\_ destiny, he cuts

himself off from God

The godless life becomes the \_\_\_\_\_ life

Three reasons the whole world is not completely corrupt: God's \_\_\_\_\_, the preserving influence of the Holy Spirit and the church

We are not to live like those without \_\_\_\_\_

### **The walk of the new self**

The old life is self centered and futile; the new walk is Christ centered and \_\_\_\_\_

The redeemed life must of necessity be a \_\_\_\_\_ life

The person who makes a profession of faith and makes no effort to break with his worldly habits, has reason to doubt the \_\_\_\_\_ of his salvation

The \_\_\_\_\_ of the world and the \_\_\_\_\_ of God are not compatible

Repentance is a \_\_\_\_\_ of mind and actions regarding sin, self and God

In Christ you are \_\_\_\_\_ from your orientation towards sin

The incarnate Lord Jesus sought the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Father in everything that He did and everything that He said

The mark of the Christian life is thinking like Christ, living like Christ and \_\_\_\_\_ like Christ

The new walk is one of knowledge and \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ is the way the truth and the life and He is resident within you

The new walk is one of deliverance from the \_\_\_\_\_ self and transformation to the \_\_\_\_\_ self

The \_\_\_\_\_ you were saved, your old self became a liability

Salvation is a spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ in His death and resurrection; it is the elimination of the self life and living in the newness of Christ's life

The invitation is to lay aside the old self and \_\_\_\_\_ from sin to God

When God made you new – He gave you \_\_\_\_\_

You have not only been made new you are continually being \_\_\_\_\_

When you became a Christian God initially made your \_\_\_\_\_ new, giving it a new spiritual and moral capability

In salvation the new believer is not simply cleaned up we are given a new \_\_\_\_\_

Because of our new life, our new Lord, our new nature and our new power, we are called to \_\_\_\_\_ a corresponding new life-style

### **My Commitment:**