

Intro. Read Eph. 4:17-24.

One of the realities of the gospel is that conversion, spiritual new birth always produces a new life. A remarkable effect of becoming a Christian is a change in how that person lives their life. We have seen this theoretically in the first three chapters of Ephesians as we learn of the unseen works of God inside the converted person's heart as he/she becomes a Christian or is saved by grace through faith.

Your new life as a believer from the inside, unseen dimension is described in terms of the eyes of your heart being opened (1:18), your being made alive, raised and seated with Christ (2:5), your being built (like a building) into God's dwelling place by his Spirit (2:22) and your inner being now being capable of comprehending God's great love for you (3:16). You have been both forgiven and released from sin, occupied by the Holy Spirit and most glorious of all, united with Christ in such a way that it is said of you that you are in him and he is in you.

However, your new life is not at all to be nor can it be restricted to the unseen, inside heart of your life. Your new life, which is defined in terms of your new relationship with God because of Christ, is to be put on display. It is seen, visible, measurable and developing. God's people have always been expected to march to the beat of the drummer of the new life given them by God.

There are extremes evident in the church of how Christians live or behave. Some it seems simply take the slogan 'dare to be different' and run with it. 'Different' is defined in whatever way the individual or church desires but it is not clearly connected to Christ and the scripture. This way of living has a certain appeal to the flesh that can be quite confusing. The ditch on the other side of the road is a careless life of supposed freedom that almost glories in erasing any lines of distinction between old and new living.

We begin this morning a major section of the Ephesian letter that simply teaches us that our new lives in Christ and in his church (Eph. 1-4:16) are to be displayed in obvious and measurable ways in our behavior. How we talk, telling the truth, solving problems, our marriages, parenting, kindness, forgiveness, work ethic . . . all of these and more are directly connected to our new lives purchased and empowered by the cross of Christ.

As we focus our attention on 4:17-21 this morning we learn that in terms of your new life, conformity to the ways of our world is fatal. A growing and active awareness of how unbelievers think and live is foundational to a healthy walk with God.

A foundational principle to living your new life in Christ is having clear and truthful reasons for not living like the unconverted. Just as your new life is vitally connected to the core truths of the gospel, so not living like the unconverted is directly connected to the core truths of the gospel. You are not who you used to be and given opportunity to consider the truth, you don't ever want to go back to who you used to be. The world, your flesh and the devil wage war in and against your mind . . . the way you keep these gospel truths straight in your thinking.

Let's get this straight . . . living your new life requires an intelligent refusal to live like the unconverted.

Acts 19:11-20 A story from the Ephesus church about radical, intelligent refusal to live like they did before they were converted to and by Christ.

Our passage contains 2 appeals with a clarifying description placed between the appeals.

Appeal #1 Don't live like the unconverted! 4:17

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do . . .

- Note the urgency of the appeal. say & testify in the Lord
- Note the target of the appeal. your walk/behavior 4:1, 17; 5:1, 8, 15
- Note the orientation of the appeal. as the gentiles 2:1-3, 11-13

Description of the unconverted. 4:17-19

Humanity's ability to think, reason, understand the most basic and crucial issues of life is flawed. Rather than human reasoning and intelligence being the solution, it was and is the chief cause of failure. Your thinking before Christ was not a defect in your ability to think, but rather your mindset, attitude and inner orientation to life was contrary to and without consideration for God. Our scripture passage describes your unsaved mindset in the following terms. This is why you do not want to stop living and behaving like the unconverted.

- Unbelieving mindset. *futility of their minds*
Mind – inner orientation, moral attitude is empty, useless – it is deceptive and ineffective. Illus. prov. 31:30
- Darkened understanding *darkened in their understanding*
Understanding – moral and spiritual perspective; unable and unwilling to see.
E. 2:3 Col. 1:21
- Divine alienation. *alienated from the life of God*
alienation – separation/at war with God due to an intentional ignorance of God
Rom. 10:3 E.2:12 Col.1:21
- Calloused conscience. *their hardness of heart*
Hardening – medical term for the thickening of the bone in a healing process
Callous – to feel no more pain, insensitivity to God's law or personal conscience
Evidenced by life lived in sensuality, impurity and greediness.

Summarize Cmp. Romans 1:18-23

Appeal #2 Stay in the school of Christ! *That is not the way you learned Christ!* 4:20-21

There is a stated sharp contrast between the mindset or inner orientation of the unconverted and those who are now in Christ. Your new life is in every way to be developed, decided and determined by the person and teaching of Jesus Christ. The way the Apostle frames this truth is unique to the scriptures as he speaks of the new life as a life of learning Christ.

The truth is stated in terms of a school classroom setting where Jesus is not only your teacher, your subject material but also he is the school itself. We are reminded of the promise of God expressed in the New Covenant of God writing his law on our hearts and giving us new minds to know him.

Our verses teach us that your life is now about Christ . . .

- You learned him 'in Christ' 2:10, 13
- You heard him. Through scripture but also truth is as real as if you heard his voice
- You were taught in him. He is the sphere we live and contain our new thinking in . . .

Gal. 2:20 2Cor. 5:17

Take Aways

1. Know the world of lost people as they are, not as they think of themselves or present themselves to others. Our tendency is uncritically view that the mindset of the world can be productive and effective in the weightier matters of life. There is an appeal, a rush, a sense of freedom that the world produces but the truth is that it leads to death. The answer is not becoming world bashers and haters, but rather to view the world through the eyes of Christ . . .

John 4:34-38 – ripe, ready for harvest Matt. 9:36 – compassion, sheep w/out a shepherd

John 17:15-19 – in the world but not of the world

2. Be a lifelong learner of Christ. Face the potentially harsh reality that your behavior is rooted in the way you presently think. Your anger, bitterness, shyness, lethargy or slander comes directly from an undisciplined mind and heart. Repent today of yielding your life to the core values of the unconverted, to living as if God's love, Christ's death and the Spirit's power were all rather futile.

Luke 6:43-45 – out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks Romans 12:1-2

3. Consider responding radically to pump life into your new life. Ask God to help you see and recognize the areas in your attitude/orientation to life that are rooted in the darkened thinking of the world. Your view of work, money, marriage, rights . . . the access that you are giving this world to your mind, heart, eyes and affections.

Tell/retell story of Acts 19:11-20

Study Questions

1. Read Ephesians 4:17-32 as a group. Then have your best reader read the passage while others listen. Share your observations of key terms, repeated themes and general direction of the passage.
2. Using whatever means available, locate and read all other uses of the term 'walk' in Ephesians. What truths or emphasis can you gather from the multiple uses of this term?
3. Read/review paragraphs 6/7 of the sermon intro. What is the point of Romans 4:17-21 according to the sermon writer? Do you agree? How would you state it in your own terms?
4. What do you think of the statement . . . *you should not live like the unconverted simply because it is wrong or bad, but because it is foolish, it does not work, it does not satisfy and it leads to death.* Share your agreement/disagreement with this statement and why.
5. Review the descriptive terms used to unwrap and open the unsaved mindset . . . what are your questions, observations or impressions about this description? What did the author intend you/the saved person to think and feel as a result of this description? Review some of the scripture references if you have time.
6. Review the Take Aways carefully. Share what God is teaching you and how you plan to grow in these ways. As a result of this study what kind of things are at stake? Pray together and for each other that your mindset would be strengthened regarding the worlds influence on your life.