

## Eph 4 18-32

Good morning and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4? Last week we continued to see Jesus' body building plan for His church. And you'll recall we saw the purpose of the gifts in the church, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, and how we should not be tossed to and fro by the false doctrines out there.

We left off in verse 14 last week, so we'll pick up our study in verse 15 and actually finish chapter 4, and the title of this morning's message is Dress Accordingly

LET'S PRAY

If you've ever spent time with little kids, you know that every child likes to play dress-up. **SHOW PIC** When my kids were little, we had a dress-up box for them. Bre had an assortment of princess dresses and accessories. Caleb would dress up as a superhero, most of the time spiderman. **CLOSE PIC**

We miss those days watching them stir up their young imaginations by putting on new identities.

In our text this morning, Paul is reminding us, now that we're in Christ, we have a new identity. We're no longer the person we once were, and we need to put on this new identity, by putting off our old sinful habits

In Christ we're blessed, and chosen, and adopted, and accepted, and redeemed, and forgiven, and sealed - and our conduct-how we live should reflect these truths!

This is also how we grow as Christians - we learn what's appropriate attire - habits and conduct we need to put on and put off. And these verses are more than just a checklist, because these behaviors will ultimately either undermine or reinforce our new life in Christ.

Let's make sure we get the context by reading verse 11-and we'll go through verse 16

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Jesus is certainly the head of the Church, but we are His Body! Imagine, Jesus considers us as near and vital to Him as a body

part - a hand, or foot, or liver, or spleen. What a privilege it is to be a member of the Body!

Notice verse 16 doesn't refer to us as bones, but as "joints!" Talk about an irony, you've gone from smoking joints and hanging out in joints - to being joints. But I love this analogy.

**SHOW PIC** Think of what a joint does. It connects bones and tissues. Every joint in your body is dependent on every other joint. If the elbow doesn't bend, the hand can't reach, and the heart is pumping in vain. That's why every joint has to stay in play. That's why verse 16 says by what "every joint supplies..." **CLOSE PIC**

Every person in this room supplies a service or strength that benefits the whole. And because of that, each of us has an obligation!

17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind

This walk is talking about our lifestyle, how we live our lives.

We're to be different from the world. Our mouths shouldn't sound like a non-believer's mouth. Our attitudes should be different. Our marriages, our relationships, all should be different. What we watch on TV and on our phones should be different.

We're different because we've been bought at the highest price! It cost Jesus everything!!

Sadly, instead of standing out and standing up for Jesus, some Christians try to blend into the world. They don't see themselves in Christ! They don't realize how special they've become!

**SHOW PIC** Do you remember the story of the ugly duckling? The ugly duck was a beautiful swan, but got separated at birth and was bound to a mother duck. His siblings made fun of him, and his peculiar traits.

Every day the ugly duck gazed across the pond at the gorgeous swans and wished he could be a swan. That is until one day, the ugly duckling glanced at his reflection in the edge of the water, and realized he was a swan after all. For the rest of his days he would be who and what God made him to be - a beautiful swan.

**CLOSE PIC**

This is what we should realize, but this is no fairy tale - we're not like "the rest of the Gentiles." We're different, so let's act like it! Let's be what God has called us and made us to be.

How do we do this, how do we live this out?

We're about to see behaviors and conduct that the Bible tells us to put off, or avoid...

First, look at the end of verse 17 again...

**...in the futility of their mind**, this literally means "empty-headed." Their life is void of any overarching direction. They're on a wild goose chase and there's no goose. They're always searching, but never find contentment or true joy.

CS Lewis described the Christ-less world as, "A land where it's winter all year long, but never Christmas."

Now you know, and I know, that our world isn't short on pleasures and their promises... drugs, money, sex, fame, all come with the promise of fulfillment. Yet they never satisfy. Later in verse 22 Paul refers to them as "deceitful pleasures."

Apart from Jesus nothing satisfies and fills the hollowness.

18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; The world around us is in darkness. You try to explain Jesus, and He's coming back, and they think you're crazy.

As you know I'm from WNY, and on average we would get around 80-100" of snow per year. But that wasn't a big deal. The big deal was lake effect snow that turned into whiteouts. I've been on the road in conditions at night where you can't see 2 feet in front of your headlights. It's terrifying because you're disoriented, you don't know where the road is going, and you're destined to crash.

And this describes the unsaved world. Their understanding is darkened, because of the blindness of their heart. It's a Greek phrase that means to form calluses. Why are people blind and calloused? **Romans 8:20** For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so

that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools

19 who, being past feeling, pause here. Sin also creates a spiritual callousness, a hardness.

A person can harden their hearts over and over until they're "past feeling..." Their conscience becomes muted and they grow deaf and insensitive to the calling and convicting whispers of the Holy Spirit...

A life blurred by sin, and alienated from God, and ignorant and blind to the truth of God - grows more and more calloused until one day that life is judged by God.

...19 have given themselves over to lewdness, (unbridled lust and outrageousness) to work all uncleanness with greediness

These are all things that are permeating our society and culture today aren't they?

It's interesting, we hear the government telling us right has become wrong. It's wrong for you to have morality and believe certain things. In their eyes, morality has become immoral. How dare you say that there's a moral way to live.

Isaiah describes it like this in his own day. **Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;**

**Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;**

**Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!**

21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,  
And prudent in their own sight!

22 Woe to men mighty at drinking wine,  
Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink,  
23 Who justify the wicked for a bribe,  
And take away justice from the righteous man!

24 Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble,  
And the flame consumes the chaff,  
So their root will be as rottenness,  
And their blossom will ascend like dust;  
Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,  
And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

You know, that's where we live. The right is wrong, Wrong is right.

I don't know if you've heard, but it's an election year.

**SHOW PIC** It's interesting, every time we elect a new president, there's a presidential inauguration and somebody swears something, I'm not sure what they're swearing with their hand on a Bible. And then they have somebody pray.

And then all along after that they tell us 'don't say God's word is right and this is wrong. Don't say it's immoral to do this. Don't say it's wrong. **CLOSE PIC**

Wait a second. Who is being prayed to on Inauguration Day?  
That's the world.

This is why we have to put these things off. They're alienated from Jesus, but we're no longer alienated.

Remember all we've studied since chapter 1-we're pre-ordained for good works that we should walk in them. He's brought us into a body where He's broken down the wall between Jew and Gentile. He's put us in a family where all the riches of Christ are ours.

We're in a position now where we can grow IN grace. We can learn the height and depth and breadth and the width of God's love towards us in Christ Jesus. He's brought you and I into the family of God-1 Lord, 1 faith, 1 baptism. So why live the way the unsaved world lives in darkness?

20-21

20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus

As Christians we know better than to walk this path! And you've got to love the language here... This is exclusively Christian lingo. No one would ever say "as you have learned Buddha," or "learned Mohammed." I can learn the teachings of the Buddha, but how can "I learn Buddha?" He's been dead for 2500 years.

This is a reminder that Christianity isn't just following a creed, or a code, or a set conduct - we follow the risen Christ.



At this time Paul is writing to a people who were living 600 miles and 30 years from Jesus' crucifixion - yet they knew the living Lord. They'd even been taught by Christ.

Never forget Christianity isn't going to church, or doing good deeds, no Christianity is a relationship with Jesus. It's His life in us.

Only Christians can say we've "learned Christ." And Jesus has taught us a better way to walk!

This is not religion, this is relationship. It's what the unsaved world doesn't have with everything they might brag about. We've learned Christ, you and I are to be vastly different

**22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,** If you're going for a jog you don't wear a suit or high heels - clothing that restricts movement and hurts your feet. You wear appropriate attire - shorts and sneakers. And the same is true with a Christian's "walk."

Our world is dominated by deceitful lusts that tell us 'if you have me, you'll be happy'

I'm \$1m and if you have me, you'll be happy. I'm the best bottle of wine you're ever gonna taste. And if you have me, you'll be happy.

I'm the purest cocaine that'll ever go up your nose. If you have me, you'll be happy.

I'm the most beautiful girl or guy, and if you have me. You'll be happy.

We live in a world of deceitful lusts, and they're deceitful cause they don't satisfy. They promise and give no rest. They give no satisfaction. **SHOW PIC** The Rolling Stones even sung about no satisfaction. **CLOSE PIC**

See we're to get rid of all of that, cuz it's deceptive and deceitful. We're to put off that conduct-what we used to do before Christ...

**23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind**, Jesus changes our heart, but we have to change our way of thinking. It's up to us as individuals to put on our new identity in Christ, and cultivate our character by getting rid of the previous sinful habits we had.

**Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

**24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.** When we came to Christ we were made a new creation on the inside. Spiritually we became were born again. **2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**

But have you noticed that old habits die hard and patterns can be difficult to break? The lag time on what happens to us when we become Christians, and when it actually shows up in our daily conduct and character can be painfully slow.

This is why we need to “be renewed in the spirit of our mind.”

When we take off what we learned while alienated from God - and live as Jesus sees us, dedicated to God - we start to act and feel different. And this isn't a pretend identity. It's not imaginary. We're affirming in deed what He's done in our heart.

Recall when Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave, he had been dead for four days. His corpse was decomposing. Mary warned, “By this time he stinketh.” Yet when Jesus called Lazarus front and center the corpse obeyed. Lazarus bounced out into the mouth of the grave, standing there still encased in his shroud.

Lazarus had new life, but he was still wearing grave clothes. And this is our portrait. When Jesus saves us He raises us to new life, but often we're wearing the old identity and the old attitudes that go with it - we need to put off the old and put on the new.

It's a decision. People who are like Christ have made a conscious decision to put on the new man, to put on Christ. As a result, they become what they have chosen to put on.

If I merely sit here and wait for something to happen—for my personality to change, for my heart to feel loving, for my soul to feel kind—I'll wait forever. I've got to make a choice. I must

choose to be compassionate. I must choose to love. I must choose to put on this identity in Christ and walk as He desires for me to walk. I have to choose all those things day in and day out. And so do you.

And in these last eight verses of Chapter 4 the Bible gives us specific, practical things both to do, and not do.

**25 Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,”<sup>[fn]</sup> for we are members of one another.**

Notice, it’s “putting away lying” - and it’s putting on honesty. It’s not just taking off a wrong attitude, but it’s adopting the right attitude.

He doesn’t say to go to counseling to overcome the dysfunctional tendency of exaggeration or miscommunication. He simply says, “Stop lying. Now.”

And notice the reason Paul gives for honest relationships... “we are members of one another...”

**26 “Be angry, and do not sin”:<sup>[fn]</sup>** pause here. Notice, at times it’s ok to be angry!

To be clear there is an appropriate kind of anger, and it’s called righteous anger.

Here too Jesus is our example! He was perfect, yet still got angry! The anger of Jesus boiled over in the synagogue at Capernaum. He wanted to heal a man with a crippled hand, but

legalistic Jews forbid healing on the Sabbath. Jesus was angry that they put law above love, and tradition over people.

**Mark 3:5** And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.[fn]

Jesus also got angry in the Temple. Twice He ran out the moneychangers - once with a homemade whip Jesus made Himself, and once with His bare knuckles.

This idea that God wants Christians to be wallflowers and namby-pambies couldn't be further from the truth. There is nothing spiritual about being a wimp. Jesus takes away our sin, not our backbone.

When it comes to unrighteousness, hypocrisy, and injustice we need to get mad. We should get angry, then use that passion for good...

...**26 do not let the sun go down on your wrath,**" Be angry at sin - be passionate about what's right - but at the end of the day try to settle your differences.

**SHOW PIC** Most forest fires start with a simple spark, or a smoldering ash - that could've easily been put out. But it was given time to flame up, and burn out of control. **CLOSE PIC**

The same is true with anger. Don't let it smolder. It'll flare up and do great damage. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 5 "Agree with your adversary quickly."

In marriage or friendship or church - if unresolved anger lingers, somebody will eventually get burned

**27 nor give place to the devil.** It literally reads, "Don't give the devil an opportunity." Have you noticed Satan is a clever salesman? If he can get one foot in the door, he can sell you on his schemes. Realize, Satan has no code of ethics. He'll lie. He'll exaggerate. He'll tell you what you want to hear.

This is why when Satan knocks on your door, let Jesus answer! You remember Jesus quoted scripture each time to Satan while tempted. Don't give the devil an opportunity, don't toy around with the temptation.

**28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.** Again, it's not just "stop stealing" - it's also get a job, learn to work hard, and make enough money so you can bless others.

Folks we can't forget that God is the one who created work! **2**  
**Thess 3:10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.**

**29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.** The language of the world is that of cursing, and

complaining and murmuring, and fault-finding and cynicism. But a Christians speech should build other people up!

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Now we're told to not quench the HS in **1 Thess 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit.**

Quenching the Spirit is to neglect what God desires. It's our failure to cooperate.

Whereas, grieving the Spirit is to do what God forbids. It's our disobedience, and both are serious sins that we should avoid.

But notice this word "grieve" is a love word. I don't have to love a person for them to make me mad, or angry, or disappointed, or impatient - but only a person I love can "grieve" me.

Grief is a wound to the heart. And it's because the Holy Spirit loves us so much, and has such high hopes for us, that we can cause Him great grief by our unwillingness to follow His lead

31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. Paul now listed some sins that grieve the Spirit.

Bitterness is the opposite of sweetness and kindness. It harbors resentment and keeps a record of wrongs done. Listen if you're keeping a list of wrongdoings, that's not love-it's bitterness, and it grieves the HS.

Wrath flows from bitterness and refers to outbursts of uncontrolled frustration.

Anger is inappropriate rage.

Clamor describes shouting, yelling, screaming.

Evil speaking is slander-which are words that hurt another person, character assassination.

Malice is ill will toward another person or people, and is the source of the other five vices

**32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.** Kindness is treating each other with grace - extending undeserved favor. And when we act graciously it reinforces the grace we've received. It helps us put on the new man. Just as it does to be "tenderhearted..."

As a Christian how can we not forgive others when Jesus has so abundantly forgiven us?

If Paul had left off the last seven words in Ephesians 4 then we could find a loophole - some kind of rationale to hold on to a grudge - to remain bitter and not forgive. We'd read it, "forgiving one another, but... or if... or unless... or until... or when... or once... or after..." But the last phrase of the verse removes all excuses, "forgiving... even as God in Christ forgave you."

As the new you in Christ, we should forgive one another just as fully and just as freely as Jesus has forgiven us.



This is all a process working out in our lives isn't it-none of us have arrived. But here's the question- are we cooperating with the process?

This section just slices and dices me like one of those vegematic things-it reveals all those flaws that are still in my life and there's still things that still need to change.

I fall back to the first three chapters. I'm glad that I am chosen from the foundation of the world predestined to be adopted.

Accepted in the beloved, washed in the blood, sealed with the spirit. I'm glad all those things are there. While I'm in the process of having these other things worked out.