

## THE CHRISTIAN'S NEW WALK

**TEXT: EPH. 4:17-24**

### **Introduction:**

1. A few weeks ago we were studying Ephesians 4:1, and I explained what the Bible means by the word “walk.”
2. Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary says “walk” in Scripture means “to live and act or behave; to pursue a particular course of life,” and this dictionary gives many Scriptural references.
3. I also pointed out that Webster’s Unabridged 1996 edition gives no Scriptural references for the word “walk.”
4. The 1828 Dictionary says this:
  - To walk in darkness – to live in ignorance, error and sin, without comfort. “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (I John 1:6).
  - To walk in the light – to live in the practice of religion, and to enjoy its consolations. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7).
  - To walk by faith – to live in the firm belief of the gospel and its promises, and to rely on Christ for salvation. “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (II Cor. 5:7).
  - To walk after the flesh – to indulge sensual appetites, and to live in sin. “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4).
  - To walk after the Spirit – to be guided by the counsels and influences of the Spirit and by the word of God, and to live a life of holy deportment. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1).
  - To walk in the flesh – to live this natural life, which is subject to infirmities and calamities. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh” (II Cor. 10:3).
5. With these Scriptural references in mind, let us continue in our study of the book of Ephesians (cf. 4:17).
6. The Christian’s walk can be summarized by looking at verses 22 and 24. We are to put off the old man and put on the new man (cf. Scofield, bottom of p. 1253).

7. One preacher summarized this section this way: “Take off the grave-clothes and put on the grace-clothes.”

## **I. WE ARE NOT TO WALK LIKE THE UNREGENERATE (4:17).**

1. The Christian is not to imitate the life of the unsaved people around him (4:17). Unsaved people are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). Why would we want to imitate dead people?
2. Those of us that are saved think differently from unsaved people. Salvation begins with repentance, which is a change of mind. When a person truly repents and trusts Christ, his whole outlook on life changes: his goals, his values, his priorities, his philosophy, and his entire worldview.
3. One of the reasons the ungodly are so vehemently opposed to Christian schools and homeschooling is they have observed that young people who are properly educated have an entirely different worldview than those who have been indoctrinated and programmed by the government schools.
4. Young people who have been home-schooled or educated in private Christian schools are Biblically-literate and tend to be more conservative and patriotic.
5. They do not support socialism or abortion or so-called gay marriage, etc. (cf. Psalm 1:1).
6. What is wrong with the thinking of the unsaved man? Paul says they “walk in the vanity of the mind, having their understanding darkened” (4:17, 18).
7. “Vanity” in this context means “an illusion of the mind.” In other words, the Bible teaches us that the lives of unsaved men and women are empty and shallow, purposeless, and fruitless.

## **II. SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UNSAVED**

1. They are **aimless**, walking in “the vanity of their mind.” There is activity, but no real progress. As far as the things of God are concerned they do not have a clue. Therefore, they are wasting their lives and are unconcerned about the judgment of God.
2. They are **blind** – “having the understanding darkened...because of the blindness of their heart” (4:18). Sin has a terrible, hardening, blinding effect upon people. Their hearts grow harder and harder through the awful deadening power of sin. They are blinded by sin, blinded by the world, and blinded by the devil.

3. They are **ungodly** – “being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them” (4:18b). Lost sinners are far from God, not because God does not want to save them but because they have chosen to reject Him. The natural man, the unconverted man, has a willful, deep-seated hostility toward the things of God. He is indifferent concerning God’s ways and ignorant of God’s Word. The unregenerate man has rejected the Light of God – “men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). Men prefer their idols, their alcohol, their money, their pet sins. “Being alienated from the life of God” (4:18) means the unsaved man has no communication with God. He is a hard-hearted rebel, lost and on his way to hell. That is why Paul says: “walk not as other Gentiles walk...” (4:17).
4. They are **shameless** – “Who being past feeling...” (4:19). The unsaved are “past feeling” because they have so given themselves over to sin that sin now controls them (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). Shameless describes many people today. Back when President Clinton was caught in his most notorious sex scandal, Congressman Dick Armey said that if he did the things President Clinton had done he “would be so filled with shame” that he would resign.” But Clinton refused to resign. Why? Because he is shameless.
5. They are **immoral** – “having given themselves over unto lasciviousness” (4:19b). This describes lewd, sordid, and disgusting behaviour. One preacher wrote: “The cardinal sin of the Gentiles was and still is sexual immorality. They descended to unparalleled depths of depravity; the walls of Pompeii tell the story of shame and lost decency. The same sins characterize the Gentile world today” (William MacDonald). How true – pornography, filthy movies and TV, illegitimacy, homosexuality, etc. With no feeling of wrongdoing, they plunge deeper and deeper into sin. It will get worse as we get closer to the tribulation (cf. Rev. 9:21).
6. They are **indecent** – “to work all uncleanness” (4:19c). Note the word “all” – incest, adultery, fornication, rape, homosexuality, and other perversions. Wicked, ungodly people give themselves over to all sorts of uncleanness. They throw off all restraints and by doing so they destroy themselves and others as well.
7. They are **insatiable** – “with greediness” (4:19d), i.e. they are never satisfied. They cannot get enough of sin. Their sinful pastimes create an enormous appetite for more and more filth. J. Vernon

McGee writes about this verse: “The meaning here is to covet the very depths of immorality. Men in sin are never satisfied with sin. They become abandoned to sin. That is what it means in chapter 1 of Romans that God gave them up to all uncleanness through their own lusts.” A friend of mine heard a radio interview with Ted Bundy, the serial killer. Bundy described how he got hooked on pornography and then needed dirtier and more violent pornography to be satisfied. This led eventually him to rape and murder.

### **III. CHRISTIANS HAVE A NEW NATURE (4:20-24).**

1. “But...” (4:20) – what a contrast now – from the wicked depravity of the heathen to the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom Paul had preached to the Ephesians (4:20).
2. Jesus Christ is the personification of purity and chastity. Elsewhere Paul says He “knew no sin” (II Cor. 5:21). John says “in Him is no sin” (I John 3:5). Hebrews 4:15 says Christ “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”
3. “As the truth is in Jesus” (4:21) – He not only teaches us the truth (“and have been taught by Him”), He is the truth (John 14:6).
4. “The old man” (4:22) refers to all that we were before we were converted to Christ. The old nature is “corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (4:22).
5. In other words our old nature has been corrupted as a result of giving in to deceitful, evil cravings and desires. They are called “deceitful” because oftentimes they appear attractive and perhaps even beautiful in anticipation, but are in reality horrible and destructive. Many a soul has been damned to hell on account of continually yielding to these deceitful lusts.
6. I read a story of an old teacher taking a walk through a forest with a pupil by his side. The old man suddenly stopped and pointed to four plants close at hand. The first was just beginning to come up out of the ground, the second had rooted itself pretty well into the earth, the third was a small shrub, while the fourth was a full-sized tree. The teacher said to his young student: “Pull up the first one.” The boy easily pulled it up with his fingers.  
“Now pull up the second.” The boy obeyed, but this one wasn’t as easy. “And now the third.” The boy had to put forth all his strength and after pulling at it with both his arms, he eventually was able to uproot it.

“And now, try the fourth,” the old man said. The young boy grabbed the big tree and wasn’t even able to shake it.

The teacher explained his lesson: “Son, this is what happens with our bad habits. When they are young, we can cast them out more readily with God’s help. But when they are old, it is hard to uproot them, though we may sincerely pray and struggle with them.”

7. As far as our position in Christ is concerned, our old man was crucified and buried with Christ. But practically, we need to reckon it to be dead (cf. Eph. 4:22).
8. We are to put off the old man and put on the new man in the same manner that we change our clothes. It is like putting off an old dirty garment and then putting on one that is new and clean (Eph. 4:22-24).
9. Paul says to be “renewed in the spirit of your mind” (4:23). This means a complete change in our thinking, a change from impurity and worldliness to purity and holiness.
10. The Holy Spirit influences our thought processes to give us the mind of Christ. We need to see everything from God’s perspective – not man’s.
11. It is all too easy to see everything from man’s viewpoint – all you have to do is sit back and turn on the TV. Don’t read your Bible, just read worldly newspapers and magazines, and only talk to worldly, unsaved people.
12. But God wants us to “be renewed in the spirit” of our mind, and that takes some effort (4:23).
13. Whereas “the old man” refers to our old Adamic nature and all that we were before God saved us, “the new man” (4:24) refers to what we are in Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:17; II Peter 1:3).
14. “Righteousness” (4:24) means right conduct towards others, and “true holiness” (4:24) means right conduct before God. Holiness means being separated unto God and from the world.
15. What Paul is saying here in Ephesians 4:24 is that the imputed righteousness of Christ should be reflected in our lives. In other words, our walk down here should be commensurate with our position.
16. A man stood up to testify at a meeting one night, and said: “Praise God, I am standing on holy ground.” Another man got up and said: “Do not believe a word he says. He is standing in a pair of shoes he bought from me months ago, and he still hasn’t paid me for them!”

**CONCLUSION:**

1. Because we have put off the old man and have put on the new man, we should demonstrate this in our daily living.
2. Paul gives several practical areas where there should be a true, recognizable change, and Lord willing we will look at them next week (Ephesians 4:25-32).