

The New Walk

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Amen and amen and amen. Ephesians 4:17. Ephesians 4:17. We've been in Ephesians quite a while primarily on Sunday nights reintroducing ourselves to this book and what a rich rich journey, what powerful truths. Now we come as we continue in this brass tacks section of the book where Paul is saying, "Okay, here is how I want you to live. Here's how to make application and live out your lives based on the glorious truths that I unfolded to you in the first couple of chapters or so." So we come to this section in chapter 4, verse 17, I call it "The New Walk." The new walk and Paul simply says it this way in Ephesians 4:17,

17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,

Let me read it again, "this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind."

I. Let's look at the explanation and exhortation to this walk, this new walk. Very simply he says, "The Lord is the primary one. I affirm with him that now that you are the recipient of the grace of God, now that the Gospel by the Spirit's power has literally transformed you," and I use this phrase often and I want you to always remember it, "you begin your life now with a new purpose and pattern." Not perfection, not yet, but as a Christian, you have a new purpose and pattern to your walk, your life. The word "walk" just means your lifestyle; your communion as you go forward in the world.

So let me give you, well, look at verse 1 of the same chapter where we see that he has hit on this theme already, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord." He says, "I'm here in chains for the Gospel. I'm here locked up." Actually, he was in a little hovel of a hut outside the palace of the Caesar and that's where he kept his slaves and many who were under house arrest. Paul says, "I am a prisoner here and in my situation in the will of God, I'm imploring you," chapter 4, verse 1, "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

Another good cross reference, 1 Peter 4:3 and 4, "For the time already past," in other words, you're like before you became a Christian, "is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles." And the Gentiles would just be the secularists of the day,

those who do not know God, those who do not have the life of God. Whatever time you had before you were saved or converted, that's enough time for you to have lived like the hellions of the world. Be done with that now, that is passed. Then he amplifies what those who do not know God typically live like, "having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. In all this, they," that's the world that you were saved out of, "they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you." He said the world now looks at you as a believer in Christ and says, "You're a weird, strange, warped bunch. How do y'all think the way you think?" That's strange for some of us. Maybe if you've got 40 or 50 years under your belt you can remember back when generally speaking our culture was of a Christian consensus. They weren't all individually Christians but generally the culture, though they may have not live that way, they would agree with you that this is what marriage is, this is what morality is, this is what good is, and this is what bad is. Generally the culture held to a biblical ethic or a biblical morality. Now we've "progressed" to where we're throwing that all away in our culture and going with a utilitarianism as such, an ever-changing subjective sociological approach to what morals and law ought to be, and we never know day today what the next rule is going to be. Some emotional person somewhere feels strongly about something and now everybody has got to be politically and follow this new concept and we've got to act this way or talk this way, or you're out or you're bad, or you're a harsh person or a mean person. Well, they are surprised at us. They hear our viewpoint, they hear our conviction and they say, "You are so antiquated and so bigoted, so out of touch. This is 2018. You are Neanderthals." That's the view of the world. They malign you.

Well, another cross-reference here about our walk, this new walk we have after conversion. 1 Thessalonians 4:5 says we are to walk and conduct ourselves "not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God." That's not who we are. We know him. So listen to me: we still have the same lust and base fallen desires that the lost world has, we just no longer yield to them as our Lord and Master. Now look, when the world acts sensuous, immoral and lustful and given to every depraved desire that runs across their hearts and minds, when they give into that, that's just who they are. But Paul is writing to Christians and says, "That's not who you are. Your nature has been changed." So you don't walk like those who all they know is the base animal desires of their fallen nature.

Another cross-reference, 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

Now a couple of thoughts here that are important why we have this new walk, why we are now embracing and trying to live out the precepts, the moral standards of Scripture, and not the way we used to walk. Well, we don't do it because this new walk and the good things in this new walk are just good in themselves. We've just come out of the Christmas season and I like Christmas, I like Christmas because I love the truth of Christ coming to the earth and it's a family time, but it is a nice thing to see in the rearview mirror too. I mean, it's exhausting. There is a lot of stuff that just will wear you out about the Christmas holidays. I didn't mean to get in all of that but here's what I do want to get on. There is a little Santa Claus song that we sometimes sing or we hear sung all during

the holiday and that says, "To be good for goodness sake. Oh..." To be good for goodness sake and there are people who believe that, that these morals and this way to live is just good for goodness sake. It's just good because it's good. That's not why we do it. We don't do it just because it's goods for goodness sake.

Secondly, we don't walk this new walk in the good morals and decency and uprightness of it because it promotes happiness and success. By the way, it does promote happiness and success. Find any group of people who strive to adhere to biblical morality and they just do better. The families stay together better. The wives are happier. The husbands are happier. The kids are happier. If you live among a people, it may not any of them be Christian, but if they strive to adhere to the moral precepts of Scripture, that people does better. I mean, don't you want to be in a culture that believes that lying is bad? Don't you want to be in a culture that believes that stealing is wrong? I mean, any people that adheres to biblical truth, more particularly the moral precepts of Scripture, they just do better. But that's not why we keep these precepts.

There is much in some Christian evangelical circles today that much of the reason why we teach the morals we teach is because it's good for human flourishing. That's a new phrase, human flourishing. I agree with that but that's not our major motivation. It is better. Aren't you thankful in God's providence that the founding fathers of this country, some of them not individually Christians, yet to a man they believed that a Christian ethic and biblical morality was the only way to set up a decent system of government because you just do better that way. But that's not our primary motivation. It's not because it's just good for goodness sake. It's not because these good principles make a culture or a people happier and more successful, but it's because of what God has done to us. He has saved us and he has called us to a higher life. He saved me from divine wrath and he saved me for divine principles. He saved me from wrath, he saved me for a new walk that adheres to higher principles.

Businessman, listen to me: I know you have to do business deals, I know you have partnerships sometimes with those who are unbelievers. You've got to be very careful there but I'm not saying it's always wrong, but here's what I am saying, don't be alarmed in your business associations if other people just don't think the way you think. They can't unless they have been born again; unless they have been saved from divine wrath and saved unto higher principles. It's a challenge. Now, the Bible is such full of balanced wisdom, the Bible tells you you'd have to leave the world to not associate with the unconverted and the wicked. I mean, we live in the world and we have to do that some, but be careful, they are not able to think the way you and I think. We've got to remind ourselves we're not just about higher principles, what Paul is pointing out here, he's not saying Christianity is the highest truth and there is other truth. No, he's saying it's the only truth. The other is non-truth. The other is completely void of true everlasting value.

Flip back to Ephesians 2 and this is why expositional preaching and teaching is so essential because if you do not continue to grasp all that Paul laid out in chapters 1 and 2, then you cannot grasp what he's telling you to do in chapters 3, 4, and onward. In chapter 2, here's what we were saved from, he says, "And you being dead in your trespasses and

sins," and in chapter 2, verse 1, now verse 2, "in which you formerly walked," there it is. How did you formerly walk? The only way you could because you were dead to God, so it was the only choice you had. "You formerly walked according to the course of this world," that's a fallen, demonic, Satan-run world, "according to the prince of the power of the air," that's Satan, "of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." And then he amplifies, verse 3, "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." While we were in that state, hopelessly bound in the stronghold of a Satan-controlled, disobedient, depraved heart and worldly lust, then verse 4, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us," verse 5 now, "even when we were dead," we weren't just functioning on a lower lever, he said you were dead to anything right, true, decent or godly, but "even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."

We live this new walk because we grasp what we have been saved out of and that's a progressive thing. We are growing. We are sitting under the faithful preaching of the word and studying the Bible and fellowshiping with strong Christian friends, and it increasingly sanctifies us to grasp more deeply what we have been saved out of and it generates a love for God and a love for his new, true, higher plan for our walk in this world. So Paul says, "I want to explain this and I want to exhort you. You are not to walk like those who have never known God. You're just different altogether from the inside out than they are."

Now II: the foundation for the walk. Now, where are you going to get the foundation from? Well, there's a reason why this shows up as chapter 4, verse 17, because the foundation has been built in the earlier chapters. So let me just review very quickly just a few of the foundational things that result in you having the capacity to walk in a new way.

First of all, his election of you. His election of you. This is that great biblical truth that is beyond our comprehension, that unfortunately most pastors skip over, skim over, or explain away. If you skip over, skim over, explain away this truth to your people, you leave them without foundation. Earlier in chapter 1, he so clearly talks about how God chose us; how we were predestined. These are biblical words. So the point is God chose you and predestined you from before the foundation of the world so that you would be one of those he would enable to walk differently than the rest of the world. Do you get that? The way you are to live as a Christian is anchored in the mind of God from eternity past. As Paul unfolds his letter here to the Ephesians, he makes you acknowledge God is behind it all. He makes us humble ourselves and acknowledge God is behind it all.

Well, our election. Secondly, the foundation for the walk is our conversion. In chapter 1, he talks about how he brought us the Gospel message. Do you understand that? That the man who is responsible for bringing you the Gospel, I mean the preacher, whoever it might be, me or whoever that brought you the Gospel message by which you came to see your sin and believe on Christ, God had to call that man to preach. Do you understand that? He didn't just decide to do it. It's interesting that whether you're a strong Calvinist or

a strong Arminian, we all agree together that God elects and chooses the men he is going to call to preach. That's not a committee vote. Mama, don't call them. The committee don't call them. The denomination. God calls men to preach so therefore it is God who saw to it that you heard the Gospel. And by the way, why do you get to hear so much Gospel and children in China and Russia and Papua New Guinea and places in India never hear it at all? Do you understand that's a wonderful grace gift? It's a wonderful grace gift.

He made sure that you heard the Gospel. He brought you the Gospel message. He made you alive when you were spiritually dead. We saw that in chapter 2, what was it, verse 4 and 5, where he made us alive. How do you explain that? I don't know how you explain that, all I know that somehow in God's sovereign power through the work of his Spirit, he birthed new life in us, then he sealed us with the Holy Spirit, Paul taught in the earlier sections of Ephesians. The sealing of the Spirit is when you begin to see your sin and you begin to be a repenter of sin and you become a faither in Jesus Christ. It may not be good grammar but it's great theology. You began to be a repenter, you begin to be troubled, you began to hate the natural you, the natural inclinations you had of pride and selfishness and self-seeking and lustful indulgence and all the things. You began to see that this troubles you and you start being a repenter of this. Don't you wish some of the extreme old Methodist teachings were true where you could just reach a point one day and you would never be tempted again, never sin again? No, I don't wish it was true in a way because God didn't design it that way, but it would be nice to not have to repent anymore but thank God I get to. Repenting is a grace gift.

You became a repenter and moment by moment, day by day. People say, "Did you believe on Jesus Christ?" What do you mean did I believe? I still believe. I keep placing my faith in him. I keep casting my hope on him. It's a part of the spirit of my being that in the morning and in the noontime and in the afternoon and when I lay my head down at night, I sometimes sing that song, "I need thee. O, I need thee. Every hour, I need thee." I am a faither. I keep throwing myself in dependence on him. "Oh, Christ, if you don't save me and keep me saved," what is one of my favorite phrases? "I'm sunk."

He did that. He elected me. He's converted me. And then he began to equip me. He made you one with all those others who are believers in Christ. You didn't choose to be a part of Christ's body, God chose to make you a part of Christ's body. That's why the word for church is ekklesia, it means "called out ones." Everything about the word ekklesia, church, translated in our new Testaments, means God called you out of the world, you no longer think like them or walk like them, and called you into a collectivity, a group, who all of them are crazy like you. At least that's the way the world would look at us. We all think alike and think different than the world thinks.

So he has made us a part of the body of Christ, connected us with other believers. We used to fit out there, now we are converted, now we fit in here. Not only that, Paul taught that you have been gifted. By grace he gave you a special spiritual gift and then he gave you special grace power to exercise that gift in the body of Christ. Then he has talked about in Ephesians 4:11 and following that he gave you pastors to equip you for the work

of service. He gave you gifted men to preach the word to you. So he elected you. He converted you. He is equipping you so you do not walk as the Gentiles walk. Here's what God is saying, "Do you realize how much I've got invested in you? Do you realize how much trouble I've gone to making you different? Now live like it." That's what God is saying. "I've got a lot riding on this," God is saying.

How could you, grasping the love and wonder of your salvation, continue to walk as the Gentiles walk? That's what you get when you don't understand the context. That's where he's coming from. How can you walk as a lost man when you are now found? How can you walk as unsaved when you are now saved? How can you walk as if spiritually dead when you are now spiritually alive? How can you walk as one who knows not the grace of God when you have been made a partaker of the grace of God? How can you walk as one who is a slave to sin when God has made you a son of obedience? How can you walk as one outside the family of God when he has made you one with his children and a part of the family of God? How can you walk as if you have no spiritual gift for service to your local church family when he has clearly endowed you with a gift for service in the church family? How can you walk as one who is not taught and instructed in truth when God has given you pastor/teachers to equip you and mature you in the truth? That's where Paul is coming from. That's why he's saying all this and there is so much more I could bring out but I don't have time to exegete chapters 1 and 2 again but it's all built on that.

This is what God has done in you and for you, therefore, consequently, obviously, you no longer walk like those who don't know God. You're different now. Your thinking is different. You run your business, the goal of your business is different than the goal of that lost man. Now, he may do a lot of the same principles you do in building a successful business, but the end goal of your business is not what his end goal is. You've got a higher or the true understanding of where you're going. In your family, you don't just want your kids to come out to be moral good citizens. Yes, lost people can do that and we would agree on some things about discipline, perhaps, and other things, but the ultimate goal for our children is to love and glorify God, not just be good kids. You understand there's a big difference in the two. We don't walk as they walk.

Well, not only do we see in this foundation for the new walk the election, our election rather, our conversion, our equipping, but fourthly, our communion. Our communion. We were saved that we might in the inner man begin to know and commune with God. There are two parts to this. I'm going to separate the heart and the mind. Now, biblically speaking these are taught as one very often. Sometimes there is a separation between the heart, you might say the emotional part of man, and the intellectual part of man, and that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to separate the two out.

1. A heart full of God. God has now done all this for us so we can commune with him and grow in having our hearts full of God. We grow in understanding all that God has done for us and this stirs a love for him, an appreciation for his saving work. It motivates us to come apart and to no longer walk as the Gentiles walk. In ancient days, it was the custom of the groom to give his bride a bracelet on her wedding day and that's the way we are. We are kind of like a new bride whose heart is completely gone to her groom.

She gladly takes a new name. She gladly takes with him a new home. She gladly takes him as her new head. And she gladly in life now has a new purpose because her heart belongs to him. And that's where Paul says we should be, a heart full of God.

One of the things we should be mindful of as we look at this exhortation here, notice it is not the threat of punishment that Paul draws on to motivate us in this new walk. What he does draw on is for you to understand the love of God and the wondrous wisdom of God in his plan for us, and how this in our heart evokes love and obedience from the heart for a new walk. Let me say something to you: I do would not care to pastor a people who lived pretty good lives because I'm such a forceful domineering pastor. That is so warped, so wrong. But I do deeply desire to pastor a people who walks not according to the Gentiles because they've learned to love God from their hearts. It's not threats, it's the heart full of God.

This idea of walking actually has the idea of not just outward conduct but inward communion, heart fellowship. That's what we're talking about, communion. Inwardly, we have been changed and we are to cultivate this intimacy sitting under strong, hopefully Spirit-empowered preaching helps you cultivate a heart of intimacy and communion with God, faithfulness in your devotional life, getting in the word for yourself. And I would challenge all of you just try to form the discipline of having one or two verses every week that you try to meditate on; memorize them enough to keep it in your heart and mind. That helps you cultivate that communion from the heart that makes your walk different than the Gentiles walk. The fellowship of the saints in small groups primarily, that's the way God has ordained it to function. It helps us.

I just heard a story about a man who was with some other men and they were praying over a little girl that had been sick and that man said, "When my brother prayed for the girl, he started by declaring to God how unworthy he felt he was before God," and he said, "It spoke to every one of us and helped all of us love and appreciate God more." That's why we've got to get together. That's why we have to have each other. It may just be a prayer this week in your small group that just really helps you, maybe not what the person was praying about, it's just how they prayed and it helped you from the heart commune more deeply and with more gratitude and thankfulness. And when that heart keeps changing to be more full of God, then the walk consequently changes. We need all of that, amen? Preaching of the word. Daily quiet times. Getting in the word for ourselves. Bible study with our brothers and sisters. Praying with and for one another. All of these are the means God has ordained to help these hearts be full of God.

Well, lastly and we're done under communion with him is a reformed mind. A reformed mind. Now, in verse 17, let's look at it again there. Verse 17, this is our text, "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord," this is what the Lord wants for you, he says, and now as your apostle, your pastor, this is what I want for you, "that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk," here's the word, "in the futility of their mind." Interesting word, futility. That word futility has the basic idea of empty. All of those who have not been saved in God's understanding have empty heads.

I'm trying to struggle with how much I should say here so that I won't be called brash and harsh and coarse like Winston Churchill and Donald Trump sometimes are called, were called and are called. Do we not live in a culture given over to people with empty heads? They're empty. That's what that word...he says the worldly people who do not yet know God, from God's perspective have futility in their mind. Now, they may be brilliant in fields of science and other things, but they have not the capacity to use that brilliance for the Creator God's glory, and they have not the capacity to connect the dots of that intellect and that brilliance to godly wisdom so that it is used properly. So they do bizarre, vile, evil, empty-headed things, like they use their brilliance and expertise to kill unborn children. That's because they have empty heads.

Now, no reason for you and I to be proud. No basis for you and I to feel arrogant or superior. We too would be empty heads except for the grace of God, except all the way back to chapter 1 of Ephesians where he chose us and predestined us to be different than that. Amen? He gets all the credit. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't acknowledge that by his grace we have something up here that they don't have, a reforming mind according to the truth.

In our hearts and minds, we now have the divine presence and there is now a divine power within us. Now we can begin to grasp divine precepts. Unbelievers fail to attain the true purpose of the mind because they cannot – listen to me – they cannot receive the revelation of God. There ain't nothing up there to receive it. They have no receptors to pick it up. God says they are empty brains, they have empty minds. 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But a natural man," a man that is still like the Gentiles, the man that has not been born again, "does not accept the things of the Spirit of God." We can say to them, "But God made marriage to be a man and a woman, in one marriage, in one lifetime." They can't receive it. They are not able to receive that. They are foolishness to him because he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised. And I don't mean to just get on the moral issues of our day, it's about everything. They can't receive why the Bible is inerrant, inspired... I cannot, there are some great scientific facts behind the inerrancy of Scripture but I cannot based on science alone with a telescope or a microscope or the scientific method, sustain to you intellectually why this book is to be completely trusted. All I can tell you is the Spirit of God has changed my heart and every time I get in this book, the Spirit of God brings me to a conviction, "This is the word of God." I have a capacity the natural world, the unsaved world does not have. My mind is being renewed by this precious book of revelation from God and about God.

In the Gospels, Jesus said in Matthew 15:14, "they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a ditch." Do you know where our culture is going today? Blind men are leading blind men and we are headed for a ditch. Do you know what's worse than that? Are you listening to your pastor this morning? Far too many evangelical and Baptist churches are on this same track with a lot of the same jargon and verbiage and terms we use but they are not following in the wisdom of God. They have turned their churches over to secular, carnal, worldly techniques and they are building just a congregation of worldliness with a façade of Christianity on the outside.

Ephesians 4:18, it's our next verse but it's a good reflection and we'll work on this tonight, Lord willing, "being darkened in their understanding," their minds are not only empty, they are dark because they are, "excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart." Hardness here, hardness of the heart is literally a word that would be used if your skin is so callused that if you touch it, you can't feel it. He said their heart and mind is so callused that if God touched it, they wouldn't feel it. Boy, you'd better be glad God took out your heart of stone and gave you a heart of flesh that can feel him; that when this book is preached, it registers to you. There is something in you that says, "O, woe is me! But, O, amen, I know it's true!" Are you with me, church? The Spirit did that for us. The Spirit enables us to have reformed minds to receive God's truth.

This is why we come running back in here every week, because you go out in the workplace and you go out in the office and you go out in the schools, and you have to live and work and fellowship and talk to people who are darkened in their minds, ignorant in their minds, hardened, unreceptive minds to the things of God, and as far as God is concerned, they are just empty-headed. Those are Bible words. Now, don't you go into work this week and say, "Let me tell you what you are." No, don't do that. No, you are to walk with a humility and a sympathy and a pity because if you get it, God by grace let you get it. No place for arrogance or pride on this but you do need to understand there is a difference.

Our hearts and minds by the workings of God are now capable of receiving the divine presence, operating under the divine power, and increasingly we are grasping divine precepts so that we are no longer empty-headed. We have new receptors in our heads that are receiving this new revelation and simultaneously enabling me to have affections for this new revelation. That's the beautiful thing. I'm loving this stuff. I'm loving these new insights. I'm loving these new understandings. And even when I go out into the world and I turn on the television and I hear the newscast and I see how bizarre and extreme and warped and anti-God my culture is becoming, I still say, "God, thank you that I love something different than that." Yes, I am still tempted, I am still drawn. That's why Paul says, "Woe is me!" That's why Paul says, "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" I hate the old man that still has those lusts and desires but there is a new part of me that has growing affections for God and his truth and his precepts.

New receptors in my head are receiving new revelations and simultaneously I'm gaining new affections for these new revelations. I'm grasping. I'm loving and treasuring all of this and I'm changing because of it, so now I am no longer to walk in this world like I am empty-headed. Paul says, "Do you know how much God has invested in you? Do you know how much God has done for you? All the way going back from eternity past, from election all the way through to his calling pastor/teachers to reach you with the Gospel and equip you to walk with God, giving you the spiritual enablement to get into the word and then sharpen each other in the body of Christ and a million things in between?" I've done all of that and now no longer walk like the Gentiles walk.

One word of caution before we close: do not, d-o n-o-t, do not focus on being unlike the world. That's a trap. That's idolatry of the world. You don't focus on not being like them. Focus on being like him and trust me, you won't be like them. But it's got to come in that order. Focus on your love for him and his word and say, "Lord, where this puts me in a collision course with the guys at work, so be it. Let me be humble but don't let me compromise. Let me be kind and sweet-spirited but let me be bull dogmatic about what's true and right."

Don't go out this week and live your life in this world like you're an empty head. God is in there. Commune with him. Be reformed in your mind by him and walk that out. And all of God's people said?

Let's stand together.