

Now What? – Eph 4:17-24

Eph 4:17-24 (sweatshirt); We started a series about salvation a few months ago called

Blessed Assurance, and after taking a short break from it, I'm eager to finish it
B/c as much as we've already covered, there's more; Including a life that follows

- Which begs the question, what is it? IOW now that I'm saved, what do I do? How should I live? Or, now what? That's the question
And Paul answers it right here in Eph 4

[17] Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. [18] They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. [19] They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

[20] But that is not the way you learned Christ!—[21] assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, [22] to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [23] and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Here's the deal – having been given new *life* as a result of our salvation, Paul tells us how to live it; How to conduct ourselves; That's the gist of the passage

And the first step, is to . . .

Stop acting like an unbeliever (v17-21)

Now that you're saved, stop acting like you're not; That's the idea; Look at v17

*Now this I say and testify in the Lord – IOW this follows from my relationship with him
That you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.*

The Gentiles in this context, referring to those who weren't a part of the family of God;

Those who weren't saved

Stop conducting your life, like *they* do; Stop acting like them

And Paul gives 2 reasons for it:

A. Their thinking is futile; They walk *in the futility of their minds*; It's pointless, and vain, and leads nowhere; At least nowhere good

So the last thing in the world we should be doing, is *acting* like them

B. We know better; That's v20; Don't live like they do, b/c *that is not the way you learned Christ*; That's not the way you learned to live for him or follow him

Assuming [as he goes on to say] that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus

Assuming you're a believer, and were taught the truth he embodied

That being the case, how can you live otherwise? You know better

- And then, just to make sure we get it, he lays out 7 different *characteristics* of unbelievers; An *illustration* for why we shouldn't act like them

1. Their insight is limited – or as Paul says it in v18, *they are darkened in their understanding*; They can only discern so much
Especially in the spiritual realm; In things that matter; Things eternal; Things above

They're impeded by a fog of sin, that blots out the light – the light of life

2. They're on the outside looking in – *alienated from the life of God* Paul says (18)
Void of any direction, subject to God's punishment, and lacking sufficient strength
 3. They don't get it – *because of the ignorance that is in them* (18)
Not that they're dumb, far from it; Many are brilliant; They just don't know the things that make for peace (Lk 19:42); Or haven't accepted them
 4. They're rebellious – *due to their hardness of heart* (18)
“I don't care” is their mantra; Closed to spiritual things, and unfazed by sin
 5. They feel no shame – or as v19 says it, *they have become callous*; Numb
No longer subject to the twinges of conscience, or feelings of remorse
And the more they indulge in sin, the easier it gets; Until their heart is so calloused, that they have to resort to greater and greater lengths to get the same satisfaction
 6. They're ruled by sex – *having given themselves up to sensuality* (19)
No longer do they try to *avoid* sexual immorality, which includes *any* act or thought of a sexual nature outside of marriage – they've just completely *given* themselves to it
 7. Their appetite for sin is insatiable – *greedy to practice every kind of impurity* (19)
Eager to indulge in more and more; That doesn't mean they do, b/c often times they're restrained by the risk of shame or loss of standing; But they sure wish they weren't
And it leads to a futile life; Thinking they're going somewhere when they're not
- And if that describes you, get off the runaway train; *Admit* your sin and hardness of heart – and repent; Asking God to forgive you, believing in Jesus to save you . . .
And committing to live his way

And if you already have, if you've already received him as Lord and Savior – stop acting like you haven't; Stop talking like a sailor; Stop looking at porn . . .

Stop reading garbage; Stop drinking like a sieve; Stop getting angry; Stop living with your girlfriend; Stop indulging

- I love some of *your* testimonies in that respect; I remember one couple in particular, who came to me several years ago having just got engaged . . .
And asked if I would marry them; And as we talked, it came out that they were living together; And I told them, painfully, that I wouldn't marry them if that was the case
B/c the Bible says it's wrong; And I couldn't unite them in holy matrimony, a union in which holy *God* is a part, if they were continuing in sin like that
So they moved out; And committed to stay pure until their wedding day

Was it easy? Absolutely not; Was it best, and right? Absolutely

B/c they stopped acting like *unbelievers*, and stated living for the Lord
That's the first exhortation here – *no longer walk as the Gentiles do*

2nd . . .

Give up your past (v22)

Now that you're saved, give up your past; That's the idea in v22, of being taught . . .

To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life [your past] and is corrupt through deceitful desires

Your *old self* referring to the sin nature you've been released from; The power/stain of depravity that used to hold you and define you; And the guilt that used to plague you
Get rid of it; Take it off (remove sweatshirt); Throw it away
Having been released from it by the death and resurrection of Jesus, wear it no more

It's part of your past; A past that was corrupt and defiled due to your *deceitful desires*
Your sinful wants, your wishful thinking, your private lusts, your "harmless" rationalizations

"Dude, all you're gonna do is look; It's just eye-candy; You're just admiring God's beauty"; That's a deceitful desire
"C'mon man, one more time isn't gonna kill ya"; "Ya, ya be a friend of sinners";
Deceitful desire; So insidious and smooth that it often comes with a measure of truth
But it's no less corrupting, and all the more reason to give up your past altogether

Not the wholesome parts, but the *unwholesome* ones

The sinful things; The foolish activities; The rotten relationships; The risky situations
Like partying; Or going to bars; Or hanging out with the wrong people; Give it up
Or maybe for you it's a life of lying; Or selfishness; Or greed; Or laziness
Or how about a desire for attention? Or a penchant for self-pity? Or flaky-ness in your commitments; Or a life of fear, or hate, or pride
Whatever it is, give it up; Now that you're saved, let it go; Do *away* with your old self

➤ There's a family in our church who experienced this in a very real way a few years ago
None of them were believers except the wife, who had received Christ at a young age
But that didn't prevent them from partying, and getting drunk, and hanging out with bad influences, and talking about things that were anything *but* God-glorifying

Until the husband and kids all came to *Christ* one day – same day, same time
And little by little they began to divest themselves of relationships that were unhealthy;
And activities that were unholy; Not just b/c they had to, but b/c they wanted to
They wanted to *please* the Lord; They wanted to make the *most* of their life; They wanted to be *guilt-free* in their heart; And they wanted to spare their kids . . .
From the same heartaches they endured; So they gave *up* their past

How about you? Are you holding on to something? Still wearing your old nature b/c you can? Or have you taken it off and given it up for good?
That's the 2nd of Paul's exhortations

3rd is . . .

Change your thinking (v23)

Now that you're saved, change your thinking; Or as Paul says it in v23 – *be renewed in the spirit of your minds*; Renewed, as in made whole, fully restored, recreated
But don't be mistaken, this isn't something we do, it's something *God* does – as we submit to him; It's something we *receive*, as we yield to his ways and do his work

And it happens in your innermost being – *in the spirit of your mind*; So that your entire thought process changes, from the inside out
That's why the outlook and worldview of a new believer changes so rapidly

They have a completely different way of processing information, and a completely different grid through which they run things
It's called the mind of Christ; Renewed, restored, and refreshed every single day, to reflect his word and his way – more and more

➤ Several years ago Becky and I received a phone call from some friends, asking us to come over and talk with them about drinking and tithing
They had just been saved, and as they read their Bible they wanted to not only conform their *actions* to Jesus, but their thinking as well

So we went, and I'll never forget walking into their kitchen, and seeing a keg right next to the table; And not like a leftover from a block party or something . . .
But one that was hooked up, in a nice refrigerated cabinet, and ready to go
And I was like, "Is that normal?" And they were like, "Yep; That's why we want to talk"

So we spent the evening answering their questions and opening the Scriptures
Letting the *Spirit* of God, use the *Word* of God, to renew their *minds* for God
We didn't push, we didn't guilt-trip, we didn't impose our own convictions – we just laid out the biblical principles, and explained them
And it wasn't long before they changed – before they got rid of the keg and started tithing; Not grudgingly, or out of a sense of duty; But joyfully, out of sense of delight
B/c they allowed God to change their thinking

Have you? I hope so; B/c that's where *lasting* change starts; And that's where the joy is

Change your thinking, and then last . . .

Do what's right (v24)

Don't just refrain from what's wrong, but do what's right (hold sport coat)
Or as Paul says in v24 – *put on the new self*
The one *created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*
Not some half-hearted, halfway sort of righteousness; Or some *fake* holiness, where you pay *lip* service to his standard of purity
But *true* righteousness – characterized by a *love* for what's good
And *true holiness* – that's *free* of contamination and bondage

Put *that* on; Put on *his* nature; Wear *his* clothes – the robes of righteousness he's already *given* you; The garments of salvation that line your closet (Is 61:10)
Do that; Do that, and you won't have to *worry* about the details
You won't have to think about doing what's right; You won't have to think about going to *church*, or reading your Bible, or serving, or loving, or giving, or anything else
Having already *dressed* for the occasion, you'll act accordingly
That's doing what's right – it's putting on the new nature of godliness you've already been given, every single day

➤ Unfortunately, we do everything *but* at times
I have these old jackets and jerseys in my closet that used to drive Becky crazy
High School Football Jersey that made me feel indestructible
College Basketball Jacket that I thought was so cool
Trading Jacket that I wore on the Chicago Board of Trade

And for years, Becky used to ask me what I intended to do with these things – b/c they
just hung there; And every time I'd tell her I'm keeping them for nostalgia sake
To relive the glory days; Me and John Cougar Mellencamp; Don't mess

Which is all well and good, unless I start wearing them around
In that case, I'd not only make a fool of myself, but I'd be *living* in the past, and *unable*
to put on the new
And if they represented my *old* nature, my sin nature – just having them in the *closet*
would be bad

➤ And so too with our lives (**Summary**); From spiritual re-birth to physical death, our
conduct should match our nature – the nature of God, w/ which we've been clothed
Which means out with the old, and *on* with the new

Pray – Help us; We need your strength, and we need your grace – we can't do it on our
own; But we want to – we want to live for you; So fan the flame of our desire in that
respect, and be glorified in us
And receive our tithes and offerings, blessing both the gift and the giver, as we return to
you a small portion of what you've so graciously given us