Nov. 1, 2026

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing

The Book of Ephesians

Alive In Christ: Discovering Our Identity & Purpose

Part 6: Put Off, Put On, Live in Love

Ephesians 4:17 – 5:2

Today we continue our historical and chronological journey through the New Testament with Part 2 of The letter to the Ephesians. This Letter was written by the Apostle Paul during his first Roman imprisonment, around AD 60–62. Paul composed four letters now known as the Prison Epistles: Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians**.**

Over the past three weeks, we have been living in the first half of Ephesians — and what a journey it has been.Dr. Warren Wiersbe observed that Ephesians moves in **two great movements** —

POSITION and **PRACTICE.**

Chapters 1–3: Our **POSITION** in Christ
(Doctrinal / Vertical)
Answers the question: ***Who are we in Christ?***

Chapters 4–6: Our **PRACTICE** on Earth
(Practical / Horizontal)
Answers the question: ***How then shall we live?***

You cannot have the practice without the position. You cannot walk worthy of a calling you do not yet understand.

Today, in Chapter 4 we cross from Position to Practice.
We move from the *DECLARATION* OF OUR IDENTITY to the *DEMONSTRATION* OF IT.

We crossed from **Position** to **Practice.** From what Today we go deeper into that walk.

And we do it on a very sacred Sunday. Because today — at this table — we are going to do what Paul commands in Ephesians 4:

We are going to remember who we are.
Not who we were. Not the person sin made us. Not the old self that walked in darkness and futility.

We are going to remember who we are now — in Christ.
Paul writes with pastoral urgency in Ephesians 4:17:

"With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused."
He is not writing to pagans. He is writing to **believers** — people who have already been raised from the graveyard of sin, seated in the heavenly realms, made citizens of heaven and members of God's family. And his word to them — and to us — is simply this:

Stop living like who you used to be. You are not that person anymore.

POINT I: PUT OFF THE OLD SELF

Ephesians 4:17–22…*17 With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. 18 Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against Him. 19 They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity. 20 But that isn't what you learned about Christ. 21 Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from Him, 22 throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.*

Look at how Paul describes the old life in verses 18 through 19: *"Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against Him. They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity."*

Paul paints a devastating portrait of life without Christ. And notice the progression — it is not random. It follows a downward spiral:

First — Darkened Understanding. The mind that is cut off from God does not simply lack information. It is operating in **darkness.** It cannot see clearly. It cannot reason rightly about what matters most. It is like trying to navigate a strange city at midnight with no lights and no map.

Second — Hardened Hearts. The Greek word here is *porosis* — the same word used for the hardening of bone or the calcification of tissue. A heart that repeatedly refuses God eventually becomes **calloused** — unable to feel the conviction of the Spirit, unable to respond to the grace being offered.

Third — Shameless Living. When the mind is dark and the heart is hard, the will follows. Paul says they gave themselves over to sensuality — not reluctantly, but **eagerly.** Sin that once required temptation eventually becomes appetite.

Now here is what makes this passage so powerful on **Lord's Supper Sunday.**

Paul says in verse 20: *"But that is not what you learned about Christ!"*

There is a sharp, deliberate contrast.

That was then. This is now.

You heard the truth. You came to Christ. You were taught — as Paul says in verse 21 — *"the truth that Jesus Himself is."*

And in verse 22, Paul delivers the command: *"Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception."*

The Greek word for *"throw off"* is *apotithemi* — the same word used for stripping off old, worn-out clothing. **You take it off deliberately. You do not drift out of it. You make a decision.**
Wiersbe uses the image of Lazarus stumbling out of the tomb — alive, yes, but still wrapped head to toe in graveclothes. Jesus turned to the crowd and said: *"Loose him, and let him go!"*
That is the picture here.

You have been given resurrection life.

But are you still wearing the graveclothes?

The old temper. The old bitterness. The old patterns of thought. The old habits that belong to a person who no longer exists.

Take them off.
You are not who you were.

POINT II: PUT ON THE NEW SELF

Ephesians 4:23–24 ..."***Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God — truly righteous and holy."***

Renewed, Righteous, and Holy

The command does not stop at *"put off."*

Paul immediately follows with *"put on."*

Three movements in two verses:

1. Let the Spirit Renew Your Mind. The word *"renew"* here is in the present tense — it is a **continuous, ongoing process.** Not a one-time event at conversion, but a daily, moment-by-moment renewal of the way you think, the way you see yourself, the way you see others, and the way you see God.
This is why Paul writes in Romans 12:2: *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*
The battlefield is the mind. The old self was characterized by **darkened understanding.** The new self is characterized by a mind being **continuously renewed** by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.
2. Put On the New Nature. The Greek word for *"new"* here is *kainos* — not new in the sense of recently manufactured, but **new in kind.** A different quality altogether. This is not the old self with a fresh coat of paint. This is a **new creation** — *"created to be like God."*
Think about what that means. The image of God that was shattered at the Fall — the *imago Dei* that sin distorted and defaced — is being **restored** in the life of every believer. You are being re-created in the image of the One who made you.

3. Created to be Truly Righteous and Holy. These two words — *righteousness* and *holiness* — describe the two dimensions of the new nature:

- **Righteousness** is right conduct toward others — living justly, honestly, and with integrity in your relationships.
- **Holiness** is right devotion toward God — living set apart, consecrated, and surrendered to His purposes.

The new self is not a self-improvement project. It is a **divine creation** — God's workmanship, His *poiema*, His poem — being written fresh every day by the Spirit of the living God.
And here is the pastoral word for this morning:

You cannot put on the new self while you are still clinging to the old one.
You cannot walk in the Spirit while feeding the flesh. You cannot grow into the likeness of Christ while rehearsing the habits of your former life.

The Table we are about to come to is a Table of **exchange.**
His body broken — so your old self could be crucified with Him. His blood shed — so your new self could rise with Him.

We must come to this Table as the new person you are.

POINT III: LIVE IN LOVE

Ephesians 4:25–5:2…25 So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. 26 And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil. 28 If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. 29 Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. 30 And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, He has identified you as His own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. Eph. 5… 1 Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are His dear children. 2 Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

The Marks of the New Nature in Community will produce actions that are aligned with Lov..

Now Paul gets beautifully, uncomfortably practical.

Because the new nature is not just a private, interior reality. It has public, relational consequences. It should be based upon a genuine concern and love for God and for others.

Look at the rapid-fire commands in verses **25-32**…

- ***"Stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth."*** **(v. 25)**
- ***"Don't sin by letting anger control you."*** **(v. 26)**
- ***"If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work."*** **(v. 28)**
- ***"Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful."*** **(v. 29)**
- ***"Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander."*** **(v. 31)**
- ***"Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you."*** **(v. 32)**

Notice the pattern in every single one of these commands:

Put off something. Put on something.

Stop lying — start truth-telling. Stop stealing — start working and giving. Stop corrupt speech — start building speech. Stop bitterness — start forgiveness.

The new nature is not passive.
It is **actively, deliberately, daily choosing** to live differently than the old self would have lived.

And then Paul brings it all to a breathtaking summit in **Ephesians 5:1–2**: ***"Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are His dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God."***

Imitate God.
That is the standard. Not *"try to be a little nicer."* Not *"work on your anger issues."* Not *"be more patient with difficult people."*
Imitate God.
And the model of that imitation is the cross itself.

Christ loved us — and He **gave Himself.** He did not love us from a safe distance. He did not love us with words alone. He loved us with His body and His blood — a sacrifice, a fragrant offering, poured out completely for our sake.

And Paul says: **that is how you love.**
Not because you feel like it. Not when it is convenient. Not when the other person deserves it.

But because **you have been loved that way** — and the love you have received is now the love you are called to give.
This is the life of the new self. This is what it looks like when the graveclothes come off and the grace clothes go on. This is the church **alive** — not just in doctrine, but in daily, sacrificial, Christ-shaped love.

CONCLUSION

Church, Paul's message to us today is not complicated. You are not who you were.

The old self — darkened, hardened, shameless, wandering — was crucified with Christ. It has no more claim on you. It has no more authority over you. It is **dead.**
And you — the new you, the *kainos* you, the you that has been re-created in the image of God — are **alive.**
Alive in Christ. Clothed in His righteousness. Sealed by His Spirit. Called to walk in love the way He walked in love — all the way to the cross.

In a moment, we are going to come to this Table together. And as we come, I want you to hear Paul's words one more time: **5: 2**…***Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ.***

This Table is not a monument to your goodness.

It is a memorial to His grace.

INVITATION:

LORD'S SUPPER SEGUE

As we come to the Lord's Table this morning, we do not come as the people we once were.

We do not come as the dead — walking in the futility of our minds, darkened in understanding, hardened in heart, strangers to the life of God.

We come as the people we now are.
Alive in Christ. Clothed in His righteousness. Sealed by His Spirit. Members of His family. Living stones in His holy temple.

This Table is not a monument to our goodness.

It is a memorial to His grace.
The bread reminds us: **His body was broken** so our old self could be crucified with Him.
The cup reminds us: **His blood was shed** so our new self could rise with Him.
Paul says it plainly: *"Put off the old. Put on the new."*
And this Table declares: **the exchange has already been made.**
You are no longer who you were. You are no longer dead. You are no longer a stranger. You are no longer walking in darkness.

You are **alive in Christ.** So come — not in guilt, but in gratitude. Not in shame, but in grace. Not as who you were, but as **who you are.** Come — and remember.

Ephesians 4:17-5:2…

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