

EPHESIANS #62 4:17,18 3-17-13
OLD WALK, NEW WALK

(Ephesians 4) For weeks now we have considered together what one might call our corporate responsibility - what we are supposed to be doing together as a church. For the rest of chapter four and chapter five and chapter six we are going to look at our personal responsibility. We are going to get a look at New Testament personal morality. The Lord is going to give us instruction, through the apostle about how to live. You want to have a personal relationship with God? That sounds nice doesn't it? Having God as a friend. But recognize that God is the type of friend who sticks his heavenly nose into your most personal affairs. There is nothing hidden from this friend. He is not into casual relationships. God is very intense. And frankly, as Bible-teacher, Beth Moore puts it - He is very bossy - in a nice way, yes, but God expects to be in charge and call the shots. Somehow, He thinks He can tell you what to do; and in Ephesians He spends three chapters doing just that. I know you liked the God we read about in the early part of Ephesians, that God who is so full of grace, so mighty in His mercy. Are you ready now to respond to that merciful Lord, knowing that just as His salvation flows out of His love, so too do His commandment? You understand that? David said, "I rejoice in thy law, more than in all riches." That is the perspective of one who knows, who personally knows, and loves the lawgiver. Here is what the God of grace says to us **17-24** *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, ¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹ and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. ²⁰ But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, ²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

Verse 17 begins with one of Paul's occasional references to the divine authority of His epistles. He reminds his readers that "this just isn't my opinion here. This just isn't one warped Jewish fuddy-duddy who is entrapped in the value system of his culture who is addressing you." Paul says, "what I say here is coming from the Lord as much as it comes from me." And

then he starts to talk about how believers in Christ are supposed to walk - how they are supposed to live their lives. He says, “walk no longer like the Gentiles.” In Ephesians 5:1 *Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children.* There he points to a positive example, God Himself, but in our text he points to a negative example that serves to instruct us. The unconverted Gentiles who surrounded these Ephesian Christians were sort of an object lesson on how not to be. Because they were certainly in the majority, the lost Gentiles established the behavioral norms for their culture, as they do in ours, but God says to His children: “you are to be different.” There was a man who purchased for himself a very nice, expensive grandfather clock. Since the clock store was only a block away from his house he decided the best way to get it home was just to carry it on his back. So when he picked up his new clock he had the store clerk help him tie it on his back. Clock in tow, the man left the store for home, not knowing that just around the corner was a very drunk man, staggering as he walked. So, as our friend with the clock came around the corner—you guessed it - they collided. Both of them fell to the ground and the beautiful grandfather clock was totally demolished. Now, how you respond to this kind of situation depends largely on your spiritual gift. I think not. Our clock-buying friend was horrified at what occurred and livid with rage. He screamed at the drunk man, “Why don’t you watch where you’re going!?” And the drunk man replied, “And why don’t you wear a wristwatch like everyone else.” You see the world is always trying to squeeze us into its mold, always trying to get us to do what everyone else does. But God says, “No.” God says we are to march to the beat of a different drummer. Different is something that Christians are supposed to be. Not different weird, but different holy, different better, different biblically.

So, you have been saved out of a lost world, you have been called unto Christ - now what do you do? You change. True Christianity does not change your Sunday mornings but nothing else. It does not give you a ticket to heaven, but leave your lifestyle untouched and unaltered. This Jesus thing is a radical affair that impacts everything you do and everything you think. Don’t think that you were just saved from hell when you accepted Christ, you were saved from an unbelieving lifestyle. I Peter 1:18-19 *know that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,¹⁹ but with precious blood.* Look at that now and tell me what the blood of Christ redeems us from? From a lifestyle. Isn’t that clear enough? That’s why it makes no sense at all for us to sing about the

blood of the Lamb covering our sin if it hasn't made any difference in the way we live. But you and I both know that churches in this country are packed with people this morning who will go home and live exactly like all the non-Christians on their block, watching the same shows, hearing the same songs, buying the same stuff, and talking the same talk. Maybe you are one of them. God says that is unacceptable. You can't do that. Change is absolutely necessary. Christians must be different!

What do I mean by that? Do I mean that we need to dress differently? Does being different mean that if the world uses computers we don't? If the world drives cars, we don't? No, no, no. The difference between us and the world will be seen in certain externals, no doubt about that, but that difference is essentially not a difference in what we do, but in how we think. You see in our text the words "mind" and "understanding" - that is what gets altered by the Lord. Conversion to Christ is like taking off one set of glasses and putting on another. It affects how you think about everything. Well, I'm getting into my first point without properly introducing it. Let me offer this for an outline today. Our text in vss.17 and 18 teach us that this new walk of faith will give us three things, all of which contrasts with a non-Christian lifestyle. First the new walk gives us focus instead of futility ®. The first thing Paul says about the Gentiles here is that they walk in the futility of their minds. That word "futile" brings to mind many things, but the primary concept here is that of pointlessness, purposelessness, without significance. John Maxwell tells a story about an army sergeant who put a private in charge of watering the grass in front of the barracks. Every day at 5:00am the private was to be out front watering the grass. For weeks the private did this conscientiously. One day there was a terrific thunderstorm at 5:00am and when the sergeant entered the barracks he found the private doing bunk duty. "What's the matter with you?" the sergeant bellowed. "It's 5:00 and you're supposed to be watering the grass!" "But Sergeant," the private said, looking confused, "it's raining." "So what!" yelled the sergeant, "you've got a raincoat haven't you?" What would seem more futile, more pointless, than standing in a thunderstorm at 5:00am watering the grass! That is the kind of job that drives men insane. Chuck Colson has written of how men in prison camps have actually lost the will to live because one day they would be forced to move a pile of dirt from point A to point B and the next day they had to move it back. Work that is meaningless! Hard work we can live with, but pointless labor is unbearable. But that is just how the lifestyle of the ungodly is described. That verse in I Peter 1 spoke of the futile way of

life some inherited. You know what that means? A life without purpose, without direction. It is just mere animal existence. Paul goes a step further and says that the reason they have futility in their lifestyle is they have futility where? In their minds. ® They don't grasp the real point and purpose of anything. Can this be said of the typical American? You bet! A college professor asked a student why he was in school. The student said, "So I can get my degree." The professor asked, "And then what?" "Then I guess I'll get a job and make lots of money." And then what? "Then I guess I'll retire and take it easy." And then what? Hmm! Even the finest a fallen world can offer, where does it lead? Where do you escape the futility? I read about some teenage girl who made a perfect score on both parts of the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Every school in the country wanted her. This magazine interviewed her and asked, "What is the meaning of life?" She said, "I have no idea." ® The Beatles put it well, "He's a real nowhere man, living in his nowhere land and making all his nowhere plans for who?" For Nobody. John Lennon must have been in favor of that because he wanted us imagining there's no heaven which is a guarantee of futility. Listen my friend, you teach your child the first answer of the shorter catechism and you have put in his hand one of the greatest treasures known to man. Teach him that the chief end of man, His purpose is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. If your child grasps that he has something that all the schools in the world cannot impart. He has a reason to live, a purpose, a focus. He will find deliverance from that futility of mind that characterizes the race of fallen, lost humanity.

That is the first thing this new walk gives us - a focus to replace our futility. Secondly the new walk gives us light to replace the darkness. It gives light instead of darkness. Verse 18 describes the unregenerate as being darkened in their understanding. You know what darkness does to you. It prohibits you from seeing what is there. And darkness is used over and over again to describe the condition of lost men and women. Psalm 82:**5ab** *They do not know nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness.* Psalm 107:**10a** *There were those who dwelt in darkness.* I John 2:**11** *the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.* That is the effect of darkness isn't it? You may as well be blind, and when used about spiritual things it means exactly that. II Corinthians 4:**3-4** *even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

This explains a great deal does it not? Have you ever wondered how people can be so twisted in their thinking, how they can fail to see the most obvious realities? I heard Chuck Colson tell of a conversation with a man from the ACLU who was an outspoken opponent of any kind of spiritual influence in the public sphere. This guy spoke of how wrong it would be to hang the ten commandments in a public school classroom. But Colson noted that within a few minutes the same man was bemoaning the lack of respect and responsibility among public school students. He lamented the awful problems of violence and theft and sexual promiscuity in American schools. So Colson said to him, “Well, maybe we should hang a sign in the classrooms that say, “Thou shalt not murder, and Thou shalt not steal, and thou shalt not commit adultery.” In their casting off of moral restraint people do and say the most foolish things. How do you explain that kind of thinking? Mental futility, darkness of understanding, Satanic blinding. This is the condition of the unredeemed.

But along comes Jesus. And what happens? Somebody turned on the lights. Isaiah 9:2 *The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.* The promise of the Messiah was a promise of coming light. Isaiah 42:16 *“I will lead the blind by a way they do not know. In paths they do not know I will guide them. I will make darkness into light before them.* So that when Jesus came they understood the significance of what Jesus meant when he said, John 8:12 *I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.* This is what Paul writes about when he says in Ephesians 5:8 *you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light.* Walk as children of light, not like those who are still in darkness. Are you familiar with Plato’s story of the cave? He imagines a society of men who live in underground caves, in darkness. And then one day, one of them escapes into the outside world and returns to tell them of all the amazing things he has seen. What response does he get? Nobody believes him. They say he is crazy. He is a fanatic, an extremist. And after a while he comes to believe it himself, the controversy is forgotten and they continue living in the darkness of the cave. The Lord says his people cannot do that. We must walk as children of light, even if people we love don’t understand and don’t see what we see. Once you have seen the light of kingdom realities you cannot go on walking like children of darkness. This new walk gives us light instead darkness. It gives us fellowship with God and man instead of isolation.

Thirdly now, the new walk gives us inclusion instead of exclusion. ⑧ The next phrase in verse 18 says the lost Gentiles are excluded from the life of God. No wonder they are in darkness. God is the light. To be excluded from him leaves you in darkness. We spoke of this exclusion back in Ephesians 2:**12abc** *you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel.* Ephesians 2:14 speaks of the barrier of the dividing wall. That dividing wall was a literal, physical wall in the temple that represented a real, spiritual wall as well. The temple in Jerusalem, built by Herod the Great, was constructed on an elevated platform. Around it was the court of the priests. East of this was the court of Israel, and further east you came to the court of the women. All three of these courts were on the same level as the temple itself. From this level one had to descend five steps to a walled platform, and then on the other side of the wall fourteen more steps to another wall, beyond which was the outer court. Do you know what the name of that court was? The Court of the Gentiles. From there the Gentiles could look up and view the temple but were not allowed to approach it. They were cut off from it by a stone wall on which were signs warning that foreign trespassers would be executed. all of this was meant to communicate to Gentiles just where they stood with God. They were strangers, excluded, separate. Our text says they were excluded from the life of God. Let me tell you folks, there is nothing more terrible than that. It may not sound so bad to you, but there is no place you can be more terrible, more disastrous. In Matthew 7 we read of a scene on judgment day in which Jesus condemns people to everlasting punishment with these simple words 7:**23** *I never knew you; depart from Me you who practice lawlessness.* When the Lord Jesus says, “I never knew you” he means that He never entered into a vital relationship with them. These condemned were separate from Christ, and so they will be for all eternity. In John 15 Jesus says **5** *I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.* Apart from Jesus you can do what? Nothing. These Gentiles were separate from Christ; what could they do in terms of real spiritual exercise? Not a thing. Jesus goes on **6** *If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.* This is the fate of everyone who remains separate from Christ. You see, you are either in Christ or outside, either attached or separate, either included or excluded, family or alien. Which is it with you? Do you feel strange in a Christian service? Does talk of God and Christ and heaven and hell bore you? Are you an alien to the things of God? Oh, please don't stay in that

condition. The only safe place to be is one wherein you can say like the Ephesians, “that is what I was.”

What is worse than being excluded? Most of us have found ourselves in some context where we felt that everyone was a part, was accepted, except “me.” That’s a very unpleasant feeling isn’t it? But just as awful as it is to be excluded, it is wonderful to be included. And nothing is so wonderful as being included in the life and the family of God. We who have experienced that inclusion, that acceptance, that adoption are not interested in keeping it to ourselves. We know our Father’s love is never divided among His children, only multiplied. So, we long for you to know this inclusion as well. Regardless of who out there has rejected you, spurned you, excluded you. You may get the cold shoulder from men but God offers you a warm embrace when you come to Him in repentance, humility, faith. On the day of judgment Christ says to some, “Depart from me.” He says to His friends, “Enter into the joy of my Father.”