

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings reflects the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at [pastorpat@waukeshabile.org](mailto:pastorpat@waukeshabile.org).

**Date:** July 7, 2024

**Sermon Title:** “The Gospel Fruit of Holiness”

Sermon Series: Ephesians

Text: Ephesians 4:17-32

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Date: July 7, 2024  
Title: The Gospel Fruit of Holiness  
Text: Ephesians 4:17-32  
Theme: The “tree” of God produces Christ-like fruit. The one is a natural consequence and by-product of the other. The people of God are holy because He is holy.

ILLUSTRATION – When is something not what you think it is? Strange objects that no one would have guessed what they were. Recently, my wife and I have been working on the family property. Her father was a heavy machine excavator. He has a pole barn that is 100x60 feet. It isn’t jammed packed full of “stuff” but there is enough that I have no idea what it does. This is sort of like the word or idea of holiness. The word or idea of HOLINESS is very much something we speak about but probably have no real idea of what it means. We think it means we are good people getting better as to our obedience or conduct. Although marginally true, our holiness speaks to our separation from sin and death and our union in Christ. That union is holiness. It is not something we do, but rather something done to us. His doing causes our doing. We are holy because He is.

#### FROM LAST WEEK’S STUDY

In our study of Ephesians 4:7-16, it was noted how the idea of holiness is NOT the number of things we do to please God. It is NOT a means of measuring growth or progress. Holiness is NOT synonymous with obedience. Unfortunately, by making one’s obedience equivalent to one’s holiness, we have weaponized holiness as a means of comparison and contrast with others.

Our righteousness and holiness are nothing less than the very righteousness and holiness of Jesus imputed to us and the Holy Spirit living in us. The metaphor was used last week of marriage and the ring. “I am not married because I wear a ring. I wear a ring because I am married.”<sup>1</sup> The ring is a reminder to me and to others that I am married. In our union with Christ, God gives us a ring. This ring is holiness. To pursue holiness is to pursue Christ.

#### **Introduction:**

“This is the second of five sections (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15) [defined] by the use of *peripateo* ‘walk’ in conjunction with the inferential conjunction *oun*, ‘therefore.’”<sup>2</sup>

“Ephesians is the most striking example of the indicative preceding the imperative. Out of Paul’s forty-four imperatives within Ephesians, only one occurs before 4:25. So, forty-three of the forty-four imperatives are located from 4:25-6:17.”<sup>3</sup>

ILLUSTRATION - We can never separate the imperative from the indicative. Paul intentionally and carefully lays down the cause in Ephesians 1-3. They function as our body’s organs. And then the consequence in Ephesians 4-6. They are our body parts. They are what you see. The root is first stated and then the resultant fruit is described. If you do not see the statements of chapters 4-6 flowing from the preceding chapters you are in grave danger of a performance-based, flesh-driven life that leaves you discouraged or deceived.

Ephesians 4 contains two sections. Here's a breakdown.

4:1-16            The Gospel Fruit of Unity  
    vv. 1-6            The call to unity  
    vv. 7-16          The means to unity  
vv. 17-32        The Gospel Fruit of Holiness

In our section, **Paul paints a picture of contrasts between what we once were when we walked according to the course of this world and what we now are as we walk in newness of life.** This meant something to the first century church in Ephesus and it means something to us today. Unfortunately, we have been taught the picture in Ephesians 4:17-32 is something we do, that we are responsible for. But, it is what God the Holy Spirit does and is doing in us and through us so those around us see Jesus. It is true, we act, but we act because He acts.

ILLUSTRATION - If I were a dog I would look and act like a dog. For a dog to be a dog is nothing strange. If we saw a dog acting like a cat, we would think it strange. If my identity were sourced in who I was in Adam, then I would act and behave like my old sinful fallen nature. However, since my identity is now sourced in who I am in Christ, I now act and behave like my new redeemed and adopted nature. For me to act and behave like a son of Adam is completely contrary to my nature. It would be no different from a dog acting like a squirrel or a cat or a monkey. But should a dog act like a squirrel it does not change the reality of the dog. **IT IS STILL A DOG!**

**The contrasting picture in our passage is equally true of the unbeliever as it is of the believer. Neither can be anything other than what they are except by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.**

What happens when we see an unbeliever act like a believer; are they believers? No, not at all. Our actions do not create our identity, nor do they define us. Remember, good behavior is good, but good behavior is not the gospel.

Although the unbeliever might not exhibit all the traits pictured in Ephesians 4:17-32, this is what they are. And although the believer might not exhibit all the traits pictured in Ephesians 4:17-32, this is what they are. I find it of interest how the church urges us to be these things, but the world does not urge its disciples to try harder to do better in their qualities. It is unfortunate the church places this burden on its disciples.

There are three movements inside of our passage.

### **Outline:**

#### **I. Their Hardness of Heart (vv. 17-19).**

Paul introduces the contrast between the Gentiles' way of life and the new life in Christ.

Notice the areas identified by the apostle: **the mind, understanding, heart, and feeling.** The areas addressed are the seeds that produce the fruit. The outcome of depravity is darkness. This darkness always shows itself in sexual debauchery and decadence. And this darkness is TOTAL. No area escapes its reach.

All of it originates from their hardness of heart. This hardness or rebellion produces a futile mind, a darkened understanding reflecting their alienation from God. And like Romans 1, the outcome of sexual addiction is more a result or judgment than choice.

ILLUSTRATION – a crack addict or meth-head make a choice at the front end. But it isn't too long before that choice enslaves them to crack and meth. The damage that follows that choice is more of a judgment against them than a choice they made. They were not choosing poor health, sinful behavior, familial alienation, social isolation, and emotional loneliness. Those consequences are judgments from a choice made at the beginning.

There are seven pictures of the unbeliever in this passage. For the sake of our study, I will change the order to see the progression.

A. Hardened hearts (v. 18)

The hardening of heart is used throughout the New Testament to describe those who are insensitive toward God. The imagery is that of a callous. This hardened heart produces a futile mind.

B. Futile minds (v. 17b)

The word “futility” speaks to vanity, emptiness. “The word contains the idea of aimlessness, the leading to no object or end.”<sup>4</sup> It is the same word used in Romans 8:20 (“For the creation was subjected to futility”) and in 2 Peter 2:18 (“For speaking out arrogant words of vanity. . .”).

C. Darkened understanding (v. 18)

The emphasis is on the continuing condition. This is the stated condition of all those who are without Christ. Notice the following verses in their depiction of the state of the unbelieving.

Eph. 5:8 “for **you were formerly darkness**, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.”

Eph. 6:12 “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, **against the world forces of this darkness**, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Col. 1:13 “For **He rescued us from the domain of darkness** and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”

See also Matt. 4:16; John 8:12; 12:46; Acts 26:18; Rom. 1:21; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 2:9, 11.

Apart from Christ, their understanding is without light.

D. Alienated lives (v. 18)

Like their darkness so also their alienation. Emphasis is placed on the continuing state or existence. “It does not imply that they had at one time enjoyed that life; it means simply being aliens from it.”<sup>5</sup>

E. Calloused of conscience (v. 19)

This is the consequence of the hardness noted in verse 18. Like the darkness and the alienation so the insensitivity. It is habitual and marks the state of the unbelieving. “The translation ‘past feeling’ expresses the sense accurately.

F. Captivated by impurity (v. 19)

Their existence is marked by an “insatiable craving, consuming ambition, giving reign to appetites and desires which are against the laws of God and man.”<sup>6</sup> Theirs is a tragic existence whose end is marked by an eternal alienation from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Sin's appetite hungers for more and more and is never satisfied.

G. Corrupted through deceitful desires (v. 22b)

“Paul saw three terrible things.

- He saw men's hearts so petrified that they were not even aware that they were sinning;
- he saw men so dominated by sin that shame was lost and decency forgotten;
- he saw men so much at the mercy of their desires that they did not care whose life they injured and whose innocence they destroyed so long as these desires were satisfied.”<sup>7</sup>

All of humanity without exception to one degree or another is this. Again, **this is true of every unbeliever whether we see this in them or not.** If you deny this, you are self-righteous. This is what I was, therefore I needed Jesus. Paul then flips the picture and shows us for what we are in Christ.

II. **Learning Christ** (vv. 20-24).

Paul explains the process of putting off the old self and putting on the new self in Christ.

- <sup>20</sup> But that is not the way you learned Christ!

I lack a better word than culture, but there is a Christ culture that those who do not know him must learn when they are acted on by the Holy Spirit. **Although gospel fruit is intrinsic to becoming a Christian it is not necessarily intuitive.** The Holy Spirit does teach us (1 John 2:20-27), but His instruction primarily comes through the ordinary means of grace in the local church [participation in WORD, PRAYER, and ORDINANCES]. AND all this instruction within the context of the Local Church is to call us to faith in Christ. ALL OF IT calls us to trust in Him no matter what.

ILLUSTRATION – when our grandchildren were born, they were all born human. They could not be anything other than human. BUT, as they grew, they learned to talk human talk and walk the human walk. They learned to read and write and progress. This growth or progression did not make them more human. The growth enabled them to live within community. We see this with our two-year-old grandson MONTY.

Unfortunately, the church takes the idea of learning or discipleship and turns it into something it was never meant to be.

There is a sharp contrast between what we once were in Adam and what we now are in Christ [de=“but”]. Our present passage shows us a picture of Christ. He is everything we are called to be and do.

A. The Foundation (vv. 20, 21).

- <sup>20</sup> But that is not the way you learned Christ!— <sup>21</sup> assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,

The foundation for the exhortation is Jesus Christ. There is no other means whereby the fruit can be produced. This happened at Calvary and was appropriated to us at our moment of faith.

## B. The Explanation (vv. 22-24).

- <sup>22</sup> to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

**Verses 22-24 explain what happened when we were placed in Christ by Holy Spirit baptism. “The Greek text has three infinitives.** The first of them, in vs. 22, is in the aorist tense and denotes a once and for all, definite, concluding action: the stripping off is to be done at once, and for good and all. The second infinitive is in the present tense: the ‘renewal’ is to be perpetual and cannot be concluded in one act. The third is in the aorist tense again, just like the two participles in Col. 3:9-10: a resolute, final step of ‘putting on’ is envisaged.”<sup>8</sup>

When you accepted Jesus as your Savior, the Holy Spirit removed from you your old self and gave you your new self.

Here are the three infinitives.

### 1. Put off what you once were (the old self [v. 22])

Again, the putting off, like the putting on has already been done. It happened when we were placed in Christ. Now, we act on what is already true. We should no longer identify with our old identity.

ILLUSTRATION – My entire childhood was spent at 830 Virgin St. Racine, WI. I was saved one month before I graduated from High School. I went directly to Bible College. Once I left home, it was no longer my mailing address. It wasn’t were I lived even though I would, on occasion, still get mail at my old address. And then once I got married, everything changed forever.

By way of illustration, the home of my childhood is my old self. Once I left that, it was no longer my home even though I would still on occasion get mail at that address. In time, however, I no longer received any mail at that address. So, it is with Christ. The Holy Spirit changes my birth mailing address. Regeneration takes me from the kingdom of darkness and transfers me into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son. My mailing address changed. I left that and even though I might still receive some mail at that address, in time, I stop getting mail at that address.

### 2. Be renewed in the spirit of your minds (v. 23a)

Remember the contrast? The origin of their sinfulness was the mind, the understanding, the heart, and feeling. The gospel changes our hearts and begins to change our mind, our understanding, and feelings or affections.

Consider the exhortations of Romans 12:2 and 1 Peter 1:13.

- Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.
- 1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, **prepare your minds for action**, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Notice the vital connection between “learn Christ” and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Mind renewal happens only as we learn Christ.

Therefore, Paul prays in...

- Eph. 1:18  
“I pray that the eyes of **your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know** what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,”
- Eph. 3:18-20  
<sup>18</sup> may be **able to comprehend** with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and **to know the love** of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup> Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

Therefore, Peter says, “Grow in grace and **knowledge**” (2 Peter 3:18).

### 3. Put on what you now are (the new self [v. 24])

This is the positive side of v. 22. It is used in the sense of putting on a garment.

When we speak of the old self and the new self, **are we talking about the rebirth of the old man into the new? No, the two still exist side by side.** Thus, “What we once were, we no longer are, but still have.” The believer now has two natures. If our new nature is God-given, then how is it that we continue to sin? Can the new nature sin? No, it is the old nature that sins. Is the old nature perfectible in any way? No, it is to be put to death, crucified, and nullified (Col. 3:5; Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20). **Unfortunately, many evangelical churches preach to the old nature hoping to improve and perfect it.** If the new nature cannot sin and thus is perfect, how does the believer grow in holiness? The new nature is as new as it is going to get. **Growth is in the renewing of the mind, of learning Christ as to His nature and work.**

ILLUSTRATION – The Ugly Duckling - “After a mother duck's eggs hatch, one of the ducklings is perceived by the other animals as an ugly little creature and suffers much verbal and physical abuse. He wanders from the barnyard and lives with wild ducks and geese until hunters slaughter the flocks. He finds a home with an old woman, but her cat and hen tease and taunt him mercilessly, and once again he sets off alone. The duckling sees a flock of migrating wild swans. He is delighted and excited but cannot join them because he is too young, ugly, and unable to fly. When winter arrives, a farmer finds and carries the freezing duckling home but he is frightened by the farmer's noisy children and flees the house. The duckling spends a miserable winter alone outdoors, mostly hiding in a cave on the lake that partly freezes over. The duckling, now having fully grown and matured, cannot endure a life of solitude and hardship anymore. He decides to throw himself at a flock of swans, feeling that it is better to be killed by such beautiful birds than to live a life of ugliness. He is shocked when the swans welcome and accept him, only to realise by looking at his reflection in the water that he had been not a duckling but a swan all this time. The flock takes to the air, and he spreads his wings to take flight with the rest of his new family.”<sup>9</sup>

This is who you are in Christ. You are not a duck, but a swan.

### III. Living Inside Out (vv. 25-32).

Paul gives specific commands and exhortations for how believers should live out their faith in their daily lives. It is all relationship based within the local church as the means of maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.



ILLUSTRATION – This past January when we visited our daughter in New Zealand, they had a bush full of chrysalis. The chrysalises were beautiful. The shell was translucent. You could see the details of the developing wings of the Monarch butterfly and the translucent cocoon was decorated with gold ribbons. In time, the Monarch within would emerge. And what was inside came out. That metamorphosis is what the Christian life looks like. It is the word Paul uses in Romans 12:2. What Paul speaks of here, is the emerging Christian. It is already in there, it is simply coming out.

Through this paragraph, you have a distinct pattern of (1) put off, (2) put on, and (3) why (v. 25; vv. 26, 27; v. 28; vv. 29, 30; vv. 31, 32).

<u>Put off</u>	<u>Put on</u>	<u>Mind renewed</u>
Falsehood	Speaking the truth	For we are members one of another (v. 25)
Do not be angry	Do not let the sun go down	Give no opportunity to the devil (vv. 26, 27)
Stop stealing	Let him labor	In order to share with others (v. 28)
Stop corrupt speech	Use appropriate speech	In order to give grace to the hearer (v. 29)
Do not grieve		You were sealed (v. 30)
Put away malice	Be kind	As God in Christ forgave you (vv. 31, 32)

I would like to tie this paragraph with our previous paragraph. Each paragraph has its own unique contribution to the larger idea, but they are still tied together by the larger idea. Together we are in union with Christ and united to each other by Christ. A fellowship united exhibit the qualities in verses 2 and 3 and now here. Rather than looking at each quality separately let us see them as a unit. None of them are problematic. Believers are described by the Put On and unbelievers by the Put Off. The only one we do not quite get is “grieving the Spirit” in verse 30. Let us consider this for a moment.

- Do not grieve (v. 30)

ILLUSTRATION – we are taught that our actions can quench or grieve or stymie the Spirit’s working as if we are that strong or He is that weak. Both ideas are wrong. It is as if we are putting out a campfire.

The grieving of the Spirit is anything that works against the unity of the local church. The grieving is corporate rather than individual. Thus, you can’t grieve the Spirit, but we can. When we are fighting against the church, we are grieving the Spirit. As a church, collectively, we speak the truth, we are not an angry church, we are a working church, we seek to use appropriate speech and we are consistently kind.

If the work of the cross is what produces and unifies the church, then anything working contrary to that source and outcome grieves the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is grieved when we reject His word and cause disunity within the one new man, the household of God.

Notice how Paul ends this paragraph.

- Put on kindness and forgiveness (v. 32)

This is one of the great verses in the entire Bible. No matter how frightful others treat you, forgive them. No matter how unjustly you suffer, forgive them. No matter how grossly misunderstood and unfairly treated, forgive them. Whomever it is that you must forgive, do so immediately. Do it for the sake of

your own soul; do it because God forgave you. What if there is falsehood spoken against you, what if someone has stolen from you, what if someone has attacked you with malice, what is to be the Christian response? We are to forgive them just as God in Christ forgave you. Tell me if this would not restore relationships and reconcile enemies. This is what we are called to be because of who Christ is and what He has done.

You might think I'm talking about you and your situation, but I'm talking about me and my situation. All of us have encountered this type of tension in our lives.

Now, before we get ahead of ourselves, forgiveness and trust are not the same. The Scripture does not call us to trust them. It calls us to forgive them. This does not mean biblical justice is removed or ignored. But it does mean we are eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This is what gives us a very tangible and concrete unity at the local level. We forgive one another.

### **Where do we go from here? Shepherding the Sheep:** (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. First, learn Christ. Learn who Christ is and what He has done and who you are in Him. This is the normal Christian life.
2. Second, by focusing on the gospel, on Jesus, you will be at peace with one another. There is no other way.
3. Third, if you find yourself trapped in a sinful pattern, seek out God's ordinary means of Grace. This was brought out last week in our study on Ephesians 4:7-16. Go to church, surround yourself by the believing community, and continue to rest in Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> "How Christ Builds Up His Church," Ephesians 4:7-16, Elder Mike Davis, June 30, 2024, Waukesha Bible Church.

<sup>2</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 581.

<sup>3</sup> <https://preachingsource.com/blog/preaching-pointers-from-ephesians/>

<sup>4</sup> *Rogers and Rogers*, 441.

<sup>5</sup> *Rogers and Rogers*, 441.

<sup>6</sup> *Rogers and Rogers*, 442.

<sup>7</sup> William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 153, 154.

<sup>8</sup> Markus Barth, *The Anchor Bible, Ephesians 4-6*, 503. See also <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/Ephesians+4:17>

<sup>9</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Ugly\\_Duckling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ugly_Duckling)