

To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Amen.

¹⁷ This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; ¹⁹ who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. ²⁰ But you have not so learned Christ, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²² that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Text: Ephesians 4:17-24 A 10/18/26 Exodus 16:2-15 John 6:24-35 Psalm 25 Resp. Ps.: 86
Hymns: 411, 398, 767, 416

WE ARE CREATED TO BE LIKE GOD

1. Don't live like the world

2. Put off the old self, and put on the new self

Dear fellow Redeemed in Christ,

The Bible tells us that back when He created everything, “*God said, ‘Let Us’* (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) “*make man in Our image, according to Our likeness....’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them*” (Gen. 1:26-27). God made Adam and Eve in His image; that is, like God. Adam and Eve knew God perfectly, loved God perfectly, perfectly understood God’s will for them, and obeyed God perfectly. But when they chose to disobey God they became sinful and lost the image of God. Because we come from Adam and Eve, we’re sinful. When God brings us to faith in Him, He restores us in His image. We still have our sinful nature, but now we also have our “*new man*,” whom our text says is “*created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*” God created us in Christ to be like Him! In today’s text God warns us not to become like the world, but to put off our “*old man*” – our sinful self. He urges us to put on our “*new man*” who loves Him and obeys Him.

1

The Apostle Paul begins, “*This I say, ... and testify in the Lord....*” With the words, “*in the Lord*,” Paul is saying that his words here are Gods’ Word. Speaking of himself and the other writers of the New Testament Paul told the Thessalonians, “*We ... thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God*” – 1 Thessalonians 2:13. That’s why Paul can say in our text, “*This I say, ... and testify in the Lord....*” What Paul is telling us is what God gave him to tell us. And when God tells us something in His Word, we listen and obey.

“*You should no longer walk as the ... Gentiles walk.*” Our Lord doesn’t want us to let ourselves be drawn into the world’s ways. Paul tells us in the third chapter of Philippians, “*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the*

cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame – who set their mind on earthly things” (vv.17-19).

The world and its ways are so appealing to our sinful nature. But Paul warns us that the world lives “*in the futility*” (from the original, the emptiness, the depravity) “*of their mind, having their understanding darkened.*” 1 Corinthians 2:14 says that “*the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*” (that is, the Holy Spirit enables us to understand the Bible). Romans 8:7 says that “*the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*” Paul warns us that the unbelieving world is “*alienated from*” (from the original, total strangers from, shut out from) “*the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them.*” Two chapters before our text Paul gives a chilling description of the unbelievers, saying they have “*no hope and [are] without God in the world*” (v. 12). Would we really want to join the unbelieving world, when it means facing life, and death, without God and His Word? The psalmist envied the unbelievers in certain ways until he thought about them standing before God on Judgment Day. “*Then*” he said, “*I understood their end*” (Ps. 73:17). Why would we want to join the unbelieving world in this life, when it would mean being separated from God forever in hell?!

Paul says that “*the ignorance that is in them [is] because of the blindness of their heart.*” In the first chapter of Romans God says that He gives everyone a natural knowledge of Him as the Creator of all things (v. 20). In the second chapter of Romans God says that He also has written a remnant of His Law – a basic knowledge of right and wrong – in everyone’s heart (vv. 14-15). But unbelievers turn their backs on what they know to be right. They can do it to the point that they harden their heart to it and refuse to listen to what God says about it in His Word. So even when they hear God’s Word, they’re not letting it get through to them.

Paul says of the unbelievers, “*Being past feeling, [they] have given themselves over to lewdness*” (the idea from the original is that they’re living out of control) “*to work all uncleanness*” (or filthiness), “*with greediness.*” The same tricks Satan used on people in Paul’s day still work on people today. Why is there such a constant push today to be rude and crude? Why are so many people mocking and defying God? Why is the world not only insisting that perversion is good, but also insisting that we Christians agree with them that perversion is good? It’s because the devil is at the bottom of it. First Satan gets people to tolerate evil. Then he gets them to defend evil. Then he gets them to love evil and hate good. Does that sound familiar? As Paul said, “*Being past feeling, [they] have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness*” (my emphasis).

2

Paul reminds us “*But you have not so learned Christ.*” By faith we know the Son of God: Jesus Christ. We know that Jesus loves us so much that He gave His life for us on the cross to take all of our sins away. We know that one day Jesus will take us out of this sinful life to the perfect life of heaven. Don’t live like the world lives. Live for Jesus.

The trouble is, our old man – our sinful nature – would love for us to join the world and its ways. The world is constantly bombarding us with its evil, which can have the effect of making us confused about the truth. What we used to know was evil we can come to think is acceptable. It’s hard to keep resisting the crowd, and easy to just go with the flow. But Paul reminds us, “*You ...*

have been taught by [Jesus] as the truth is in Jesus.” The idea from the original is that real truth is found in Jesus. Jesus says, *“If you abide in My Word, ... you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (Jn. 8:31-32). The truths of God’s Word set us free from confusion and temptation. By staying close to Jesus’ Word – by hearing God’s Word at church and studying it at home – we stay close to Jesus. Through His Word Jesus keeps the truth before our eyes and in our hearts, and keeps us from being led astray by the world and its evil.

Paul says, *“You have been taught by Him, [to] put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.”* Paul says that our *“old man grows corrupt.”* From the original, that’s an on-going process. Our sinful nature is constantly pushing to have us give in to our sinful *“lusts.”* Paul calls our sinful desires *“deceitful”* because they can seem so reasonable and acceptable to us, and because they focus only on pleasure and never on consequences. Our old man loves sin – there’s a part of us that loves sin. (Think of our “pet sins,” the weaknesses that we all have.) Paul urges us, *“Put off”* (from the original, *“throw off, be done with”*) *“the old man.”* With God’s help, don’t indulge your sinful nature. With God’s help, fight it. Turn your back on it, and turn to Jesus and His Word.

Paul tells us, *“Put off ... the old man..., be renewed”* (from the original, *“be continually made new”*) *“in the spirit of your mind; ... and put on the new man”* (the part of us that loves God and walks in His ways). *“[Being] continually made new”* isn’t something we do (my emphasis). God continually makes us new. Our *“new man”* is God’s work. Paul says in Philippians 2:13, *“It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”* *“[Being] continually made new in the spirit of [our] mind”* isn’t temporarily changing our mind. It’s an on-going renewing of our whole attitude, our whole mindset. Putting off our sinful self and putting on our new self is a life-long process. God accomplishes it in us as we regularly get His Word before our eyes and in our ears and pray, *“Lord, in Your Word You tell me what is right and what is wrong. Forgive me for the wrong things I so often do. Help me, Lord, strengthen me so that I don’t do what You say is wrong, and I do what You say is right.”* The Bible assures us, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 Jn. 1:9). Paul speaks for us all in Galatians 2:20, *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*

Paul urges us, *“Put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”* God helps us to be more like He is: righteous and holy. Romans 14:8 says, *“We are the Lord’s.”* We’re not slaves to the world and its evil, or slaves to our sinful flesh and its desires. God has given us our new man who hates sin and loves God and loves to do the good things He wants us to do, and leads us to do them. Scripture assures us, *“If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Cor. 5:17).

“Heavenly Father, thank You for bringing us to believe in Your Son and so creating us to be like You. Thank You for loving us, and for working love in our hearts for You. Thank You for giving us Your Word in which You tell us Your will for us. Help us to understand Your Word and believe it and obey it. Help us not to live like the world, and to put off our old, sinful self. Forgive us for the countless times we fail and fall into sin. Help us to put on the new self who knows You and loves You and loves to walk in Your ways. Keep us always as Your children, until You take us to heaven where You will perfectly restore us in Your image forever.” Amen.