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### EXPOSITORY SERMON

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### LIVE WORTHILY

**Scripture Reading – Ephesians 4:1-3, 17- 32.**

#### **Introduction**

Paul has a way of cutting through unimportant issues to highlight what is vital to the Christian. In the first verse of this fourth chapter of Ephesians Paul gives a clear directive to the Christians. “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” Paul is summing up the responsibilities of those who have accepted the blessings of the salvation from

the Hand of God. As one has pointed out that what Paul is saying is that “If God’s love is great, if His salvation is so powerful, if God has granted such reconciliation, then the believers should live accordingly. The children of God should value God’s love enough to be shaped by it. The calling refers to salvation and responsibility of every Christian.” (The app. Commentary Snodgras P196.)

At this point in his letter Paul has reached halfway in the message which is the burden of his heart. One has said that “he seemed to be like a man sitting at the controls of a powerful spot light.” He has discussed the events that had led to the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, and explains how man could be reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He describes the purpose of God to create a people who he called the church, and turns the spotlight directly on the Christians in Asia. “They had come to see God as He had been and still is, and now Paul teaches **what they should be, and how they should act and think..**” It was this knowledge of God that was designed to influence their conduct. Since God is a holy God then a relationship with Him should be holy. The character of God determines the nature of conduct of the Christians. He had taught them about God and that knowledge was to be followed by their responsibility to Him. The key word of the **first three chapters** of this letter is the word “**KNOW.**” He had taught them to know the truths of Christian doctrine and who God is. **In chapters 4-6,** however the key word is walk or live. Note what he says In Chapter 4:1. He urges the Christians to “walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called.” In chapter 4:17 “they were to walk no longer as the Gentiles walked.” And in Chapter 5:2 they were to “walk in love.” In 5:8 “walk as children of light.” And in chapter 5:15. “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise.” Their conduct was to be compatible with their confession of faith. The early Christians were known as people of “**the way.**”**The message is clear that knowledge of God and his truth should bear the fruits of holiness. “I urge you,” he says, in Ephesians 4: 1 “to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” In fact Paul feels so strongly about it he says in chapter 4:17, “I**

insist on it.” And he goes on with the same intensity “you must no longer live as the Gentiles do.....” This is a note that should be sounded in the church. He points out the reason why. He underlines the need to live differently. There was to be

**1. A DEFINATE CONTRAST between a life live under the domination of sin and the life lived under the control of God.**

**Ephesians 4: 17-19.** They were to live differently to the way the world about them lived. He is highlighting the kind of life from which the Christian has been delivered “So I tell you this,” He says, “and **insists on it in the Lord**, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.” Paul is describing some of the excesses which took place at Ephesus which was a cesspool of wickedness. Some of the Christians had been redeemed from this lifestyle and Paul firmly tells them “I tell you this, **and insist on it** in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do.” We recognize that not everyone who is apart from God will indulge in the kind of excesses described here. But there lies within the heart of man the potential and possibility of drifting into these excesses. There is a basic sinful state of mind and heart in man that gives rise to sinful acts. This sinful condition is found in everyone who does not know the saving and cleansing power of the grace of God, and it reveals itself in various forms or attitudes. Some of these attitudes are as follows. The first is,

**a. The Blindness of the Mind. Ephesians 4:17-19.** “You must no

longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

**V.18 They are darkened in their understanding** and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.” Do not live in this way He says and I insist upon it. Dr. John MacArthur points out that “....the basic issue of life-style centers in the mind. Paul

continues to speak of understanding and ignorance (v.18), learning and teaching (vv20-21) and mind and truth(vv23-24) - all of which are tied in with the intellect. Because unbelievers and Christian think differently they are therefore to act differently. So far as spiritual and moral issues are concerned, an unbeliever does not think straight.” In the areas of moral and spiritual values the unregenerate or unsaved mind is warped, perverted and blinded. Paul writing to Titus made this clear “To the pure all things are pure, but those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact both their minds and conscience are corrupted.” Now Paul lays it down in its naked reality. **The mind apart from God is in the dark**- it is blind. The second state about which Paul speaks in this passage of a degenerate or unsaved condition is,

**b. The Hardness of Heart. Ephesians 4:18-19.** “They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of their ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.....having lost all sensitivity.....” The word hardness has the idea of being rock hard and therefore unresponsive – it is the unresponsiveness of a corpse. One has pointed out that, “ it was used by physicians to describe the calcification that forms around broken bones and becomes harder than the bone itself. It was also used of the hard formations that sometimes occur in the joints and cause them to become immobile. It could therefore convey the idea of paralysis as well as of hardness. Sin has a petrifying effect, and the heart of the person who continually chooses to sin becomes hardened and paralyzed to spiritual truth, utterly insensitive to the things of God.” And so Paul is talking about an extremely serious spiritual disease in the heart of man. This is a deep tragedy, but this tragedy is intensified when in the church there are those who sit under the sound of the gospel, Sunday after Sunday and harden their hearts to the voice of the Spirit of God. The problem here is that, there will come a time when the Spirit of God will no longer strive with the heart that continually steels itself against the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Some have called this blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the sin that God will not forgive. Be that as it may

hardness of heart is an extremely dangerous attitude to take. The third attitude of this degenerate condition is,

**c. Recklessness of Desire. Ephesians 4:17. Ephesians 4:19.**

“Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.” The hardened heart produces insensitivity. When Paul talks about the Gentiles lacking sensitivity, he really means “ceasing to feel any kind of pain.” Such a soul is “inwardly dead and inwardly blind. And he says when that happens there is no restraint in the exercise of bodily appetites. As Leon Morris points out, “Paul is speaking of the person who is concerned only with the gratification of his or her desires, whose purpose in life is to pursue and find those activities which gratify selfish lusts? Paul insists that the Christians no longer are to live in this way, but rather they are to live a life which is worthy of the calling which they received.” So in this way Paul highlights some of the characteristics of the life not worthy of the Gospel and it is direct contrast with the life that is worthy of the Gospel. Now Paul instructs us that the Christian who walks worthy has

**2. A DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER. Ephesians 4:22-24.**

Note his significant words, “you were taught, he says, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” This is a description of the character of the life lived worthy of the calling the Christian received. A new self created to be like God and note, not created to be a little God, as some in the evangelical movement would have us erroneously believe, but to be LIKE Him in true righteousness and holiness.

How does this happen. It starts in a,

**a. A Decisive Action. Ephesians 4:22-24.** It is a deliberate decisive and personal action that must be taken. This action has two faces to it. First there is,

**i. Something To be repudiated. Ephesians 4:22.** “Put off your old self.” The question is “How does that happen”? If we are to live holy lives, there is no doubt that the old self has to be repudiated. **The old ways have to be renounced. It is only the cross that provides for the death of sinful self.** Paul writing to the church at Rome chapter 6:6. “We know that our old self was crucified with Him...” One paraphrased this verse “everything connected with the old way of life has to go. It is rotten through and through.” We are dealing with biblical truth which deals with the root of a serious problem in man. When we talk about the old self, we are talking about a radical problem in man, and this radical problem needs a radical provision. And that radical provision is the Cross. Offensive or not it is the only way to a new life. Paul in Galatians 2:20 testified “I am crucified with Christ.” Here he says “Put off your old self.” This is the radical action which gives birth the fruit of a “life worthy of the calling we have received.” There is something to be repudiated. Second there is,

**ii. Something To be Received. Ephesians 4:23-24.** Paul said you were **“taught .....to be made new in the attitudes of your minds; and to put on the new self.** One has paraphrased it “.take on an extremely new way of life.” (Peterson). The phrase being “...made new in the attitude of your mind is significant. Being a Christian means more than eliminating a few sinful habits. It begins with a godly sorrow for personal sin that leads to repentance. And Ambrose of Milan said that “repentance is to cease from sin.” Being made new, said one, is a thorough going process, it means a complete overhaul, the remaking of all of life. It essentially means a complete change.” It means being born from above or as Paul would say in 1 Corinthians 5:17-18. “...If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come. All of this is from God.” Paul in the 12th chapter of Romans v. 2, writes “....do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” To live the life worthy of the calling we have received, there is something to be repudiated and something to be received. This decisive action must be taken and it will result in ,

**b. A Dynamic Transformation. Ephesians 4:24-25. "...Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."** The expression "new man" is used only twice (Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:24). Each time it is used in contrast with the "old self." One of the most significant words of the Gospel is the word "new." Paul uses the expression "new creation" 2 Corinthians 5:17 and "new creation" in Galatians 6:15. The Old Testament promises a "new Heart" and a "new spirit" in Ezekiel 36:26. We have already seen that a new self is a person in whom the old sinful life is a thing of the past, and in which the new has come and this dynamic transformation is from God. Paul insists that a changed life can only come from God. The Christian possesses a distinctive character "created," said Paul to be "like God in true righteousness and holiness" God is not some kind of Divine tinker who patches up the life. God is the Divine Creator who creates in man a new nature - new self - a holy and righteous person inwardly so that he can fulfill the purposes of God for his life or as Paul wrote **"created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."** This is the distinctive character of the Christian who lives a life worthy of the calling he or she has received. But tied together with a distinctive character is

**3. A DEFINING CONDUCT. Ephesians 4:2-3, 25-32.** The nature of our character will determine the nature of our conduct. As a man thinks in his heart so he is. Character is the foundation of our conduct. It is the fountain from which our actions flow. Jesus said what is in a man comes out of man. What a man is in himself determines what he does. Jesus made abundantly clear, that a bad tree produces bad fruit and a good tree produces good fruit. The new man lives a new life – a life created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. This is the life style which defines a Christian. I have mentioned before that there is a bumper sticker which is somewhat limited statement as it relates to the gospel. "I am not perfect, I am just forgiven." So many accept that thought with an apathetic satisfaction. It is not that we are perfect, but we are more than just forgiven. **We are new creatures in Christ created by God**

**to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.** Paul urged the believers to go on to perfection and live as children of the light. In the very next chapter Paul writes to the Christians “you were once darkness but now you are light in the Lord. **Live as children of light(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)** and find out what pleases the Lord.” Ephesians 5:8-10. To walk worthily as a Christian involves a radical change in first

**i.Character or what we are. We have established that to live a life worthy of the calling we have received there must be a radical change in character.**

**Let me now move to the radical change**

**ii. In conduct or what we do.** And then we will reflect on the radical change

**iii. In conversation or in what we say. But let me now move to Paul’s concern with**

**a. Radical Change in Conduct. Ephesians 4:25-28.** Paul expects this to happen. Note what he says in verses 17-25 he has talked about putting off the old self and “putting on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” As he moves into verse 25 he writes “therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor.” You have put on the new self said Paul **“THEREFORE”** put off evil conduct. The words “put off” are in the imperative. It **MUST** be done if we are live worthily as a Christian. Notice some of the things that we are to discard.

**i.Put off lying. Ephesians 4:25.** Lying and dishonesty were commonplace in Paul’s day. One has pointed out that in some cultures “deception was considered justified, if it brought prosperity.....The commandment. “you shall not bear false testimony against your neighbour”(Ex.20:16.) was part of an ancient ritual; it was remembered in the temple, but (then) forgotten on the streets.” But to Paul on the streets, “in the every day living is where it should be remembered. The



fact that unbelievers told lies and lived that way made it imperative that should Christians should be truthful and live truthfully. To become a Christian means a radical change in conduct. Paul said “Put off falsehood..” Furthermore he says

**ii. Put off sinful anger. Ephesians 4:26.** Anger in itself is not necessarily sinful. God is angry with sin. Jesus was angry at the hard-heartedness of the Pharisees. There is an anger which is not sinful. But the anger which is self-centered, a smoldering resentment, hidden malice and bad temper is essentially sinful. One has written that “we sin in anger when its root is self, when our anger is directed not so much against the sin as the sinner, and because of some personal hurt, rather than for the sake of Christ’s glory and the honor of His Name. To be angry and sin not, we must be “angry at nothing but sin.” To live worthily the holy life, does not make place or allow for the smoldering fires of revenge and vindictiveness. If there is any anger at all, do not allow the sun to set on your anger. Do not let your anger give a foothold or place to the devil, Be angry and sin not. Put off sinful anger. But also put off,

**iii. Put off dishonesty. Ephesians 4:28. “Thieves must give up thieving.”** Stealing is incompatible with the life which is worthy of the calling we have received. Clearly, there is a defining conduct in the life of holiness. What Paul is saying is, “If call ourselves Christian, let us at least live like Christians” so as to glorify Christ. When we put off the old self and put on the new self there will be radical change in character , conduct and,

**b. A Radical Change in Conversation. Ephesians 4:29.** Note what Paul says here in verse 29, “do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, BUT only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” The K.J.V. call it corrupt conversation. But this kind of conversation is incompatible with the life lived worthily or in holiness. “Corrupt speech can be traced to but one source: the unclean flow from an unclean fountain – the heart. The new self produces clean fruit. The Christian will

always reveal a distinct change in the conduct of his or her life and in their conversation. This is what Paul means to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

## **Conclusion**

Living the life that is worthy of the calling we have received, is the Christ like life for holiness is Christ likeness. A Christian woman experienced a most unusual dream. While sleeping, she dreamed that Christ was coming to visit her the next day at 4.00 p.m. Her dream then carried her through a time warp to the coming day. On the day of her Lord’s expected arrival, she feverishly worked to clean and prepare her house. At four pm she heard a knock at the door. Quickly, the woman examined her appearance in the mirror, then walked swiftly to the door. In shock and horror, she saw a grotesque, dirty figure standing on the other side of the threshold. She feared this emaciated and disheveled individual would ruin her visit with Christ so she rudely demanded, “Who are you?” The man answered, “I am the One you are expecting.” She quickly stated, “You are not the Jesus I know!” To which He replied, “No, but I am the Jesus, others see in you!” Whether we like it or not, our behavior paints a picture of the Lord. What image do others see on the canvas of your life? Paul says “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”