

## YEAR END GIVING

- Deficit = ~\$35,000 as of end of September
- Income:
  - This year we've lost 5-6 givers = ~\$3,000/month
  - Others have diminished amounts/frequency of giving
  - We have had new givers, but not at same level.
- Expense:
  - Costs across the board have consistently gone up
- Solution
  - Movement of giving
    - Nothing to something
    - Something to percentage
    - percentage to tithe
    - Tithe to sacrificial
  - Year End giving to Fathom

## INTRODUCE

Well, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to Ephesians chapter 4.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to Ephesians 4,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
  - under every single chair.
  - You'll find Ephesians 4 on page **977**.

## INTRODUCTION

So, I've said in this Ephesians series that the book is broken down into two halves.

- Chapters 1-3 deal with BELIEF,
- and chapters 4-6 move to BEHAVIOR.

And we've said on repeat: **that BELIEF precedes BEHAVIOR.**

So, in chapter 4 we've started with BEHAVIORS inside the church.

- We talked about being UNITED with other Christians
- over the essentials of our faith...

And last week we saw that

- God provides each Christian
- with gifts and abilities
- that are used to equip one-another
- to build up the church
- until we all attain to maturity.

## TRANSITION

Now, in the last two paragraphs in chapter 4 there's like a micro-chasm of the whole book.

- The first half, verses 17-24,
  - recap the BELIEF side of things.
- And the second half, verses 25-32,
  - presents individual BEHAVIORS
  - Christians are to live out.

Let's go. Ephesians 4:17...

## EPHESIANS 4:17

[17] Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.

### EXPLAIN: GENTILES

Now, Paul opens by mentioning Gentiles,

- which in this context simply means,
- anyone who doesn't follow Jesus Christ.

And interestingly, Paul is writing to Gentiles.

- Most of the Christians in Ephesus
  - were Gentile converts
  - as opposed to Jewish converts.

So, he's saying, to former gentiles,

- don't continue living
- in your former way of life
- as the Gentiles do.

And that sets up this whole section.

- He's going to give a description
  - of what the Gentiles are like...
- and then he's going to contrast it with how they,
  - as Christians, are to live.

## TRANSITION

So, this is how the Gentiles walk...and really,

- this is how each one of us walked...
- before we came to know Jesus.

Verse 18:

## EPHESIANS 4:18-19

[18] They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. [19] They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

## EXPLAIN

So, let's walk through this description of

- the gentiles...
- or non-Christians...
- or, really, each of us before Christ saved us.

First, we were **darkened in our understanding**.

- Paul goes out of his way to emphasize the mental dimension
- in our estrangement from God.
  - Our mind-sets were drastically affected.
  - Our thinking was darkened.
  - We were blind to the truth.

And that leads to the next phrase:

### Alienated from the life of God.

- We were alienated...
- separated...
- dead...
- having no relationship at all with the living God.

And this state of alienation was because of...

### A hardness of heart.

- This is a stubbornness that is willful and culpable.
- This is an obstinate rejection of the truth of God...
- and it's the beginning of a terrible downward path of evil.

So, this is really chipper stuff, right? Well, Paul goes on.

Verse 19 continues: that hardness caused a loss of all sensitivity,

- the text says **they've become calloused**,
  - but this term casts the image of skin
  - that had become so thick and hard
  - that it no longer felt pain.

And because of the lack of moral feeling and discernment

- there are no restraints
- to keep us from plunging
- into all kinds of degrading activities.
- He lists **sensuality** and **impurity**.
- And we're **greedy to practice** those things...
  - There's a continual lust for more and more and more.

## TRANSITION

So, **you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.**

- He's reminding them about who they used to be,
- and warning them NOT to go back to those ways.

This feels very much like Ephesians 2:1-3.

- You were dead...
- You followed the prince of the power of the air...
- You were a son of disobedience...
- You lived in your flesh...
- You were deserving of wrath...

But now, he turns...verse 20:

## EPHESIANS 4:20

**[20] But that is not the way you learned Christ!**

## EXPLAIN: TRANSLATION

Now, some take this to mean nothing more than "learned ABOUT Christ"

- which is actually how
- the New Living Translation translates it.

But the word "*about*" isn't in the Greek.

Actually, Paul uses very unusual wording here.

It is literally translated:

*"But you did not learn Christ in this way!"*

- Nowhere else in the Bible,
  - nor in prebiblical Greek documents,
- do we ever have the phrase “to learn” a person.
- *You did not learn Christ this way.*

What this means is that...

- Jesus Christ HIMSELF is the content.
- We don't learn ABOUT Jesus.
- We LEARN HIM.

This is why Christianity is a religion AND YET it is so much more.

- Religions are an adherence to a set of beliefs,
  - doctrines,
  - and precepts.

And yes, there is that aspect of our faith.

But where Christianity is different,

- is we don't just LEARN the religion...
- but we actually RECEIVE Christ.
- We LEARN Christ!

Learning Christ means

- welcoming him as a living person
- and being shaped by his teaching.

## TRANSITION

So, all of this is essentially a reminder...

- of who these believers in Christ were before they were saved,
- AND that they have received a relationship with Christ.

Now, to the crux of this passage. Verse 21:

### **EPHESIANS 4:21-24**

[21] assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, [22] to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [23] and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

- Now, this old-self/new-self idea is a really big deal,
- and this metaphor shows up multiple times
  - in the New Testament.

And it's a similar metaphor to putting on and taking off a garment.

- The old self must be taken off
- And it stands in stark contrast to the new self.

### **ILLUSTRATION: LAZARUS**

And my favorite picture of this in the New Testament is in John 11... where we read the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

Lazarus is one of Jesus' best friends.

- He falls ill, and eventually dies.
- And Jesus shows up after Lazarus is already dead.
  - In fact, he even waited a few days,
  - just to make sure his body began to stink a little bit.



- But Jesus arrives,
- talks with Lazarus' sisters,
- weeps over the death of his friend...
- and then comes to the tomb.

And the part of this story that always fascinates me is in John 11:43

### **SLIDE JOHN 11:43–44**

[43] When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." [44] The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

### **EXPLAIN: UNBIND**

Now, Biblical authors don't waste words.

- So, it always bothered me that he said: **unbind him**.
  - Why command him to be unbound?
  - Why command this? **BLANK SLIDE**

### **APPLICATION**

Well, I don't know about you,

- but even though I've been made alive in Christ...
  - even though I've put on the new self...
- I still have a propensity to put on the clothes I wore before...
  - when I was dead.
  - The old-self.

Theologically we call this the residual effects of sin, or backsliding. Now, listen to me, if you're in Christ, here's what has happened to you.

- You were dead in your sin.
  - Darkened.
  - Alienated.
  - Hardened.
  - Calloused.
  - Given up to sensuality.
  - Greedy to practice every kind of impurity.
- You were dead in the grave!

And at just the right time Jesus stepped into your life and he called you out.

- He called your name and he said,
  - *"Come out! Get up and walk!"*
- And you went from death to life.

But even though you were made alive,

- you were still all wrapped up
- in the clothes of your former deadness.

And now he says,

- *"It's time to take those clothes off.*
- *That stuff doesn't fit you anymore.*
- *That's not who you are anymore."*

And for the rest of our lives, we are on the process

- of taking off the old...
- and putting on the new.

## TRANSITION

Now, to the second half of our text:  
here's where Paul finally gives us a list.

And all the Type-A people in the room gave a shout of praise!

- The rest of this chapter is a list of specific,
- concrete exhortations
- with a clear distinction
- between the old way of life and the new.

So, these are some nitty gritty parts of Christian behavior.

And before I read it, I just want to remind you

- that Paul takes painstaking efforts
- for you to understand and BELIEVE...
  - to LEARN CHRIST...
- before you take on these BEHAVIORS.

Not because they aren't important. No!

- Behavior for the Christian is of the utmost importance.

But your motivation of why you strive to behave is crucial!

## ILLUSTRATION: CARROT

Charles Spurgeon illustrates like this:

There once there was a gardener, and he grew a carrot.

- And it was a huge carrot.
- And he took it to his king,
- and he said,

- *“This is the greatest carrot I’ve ever grown.*
- *And I want to give it to you*
- *because you’re the king I love,*
- *and you’re a great king,*
- *and I want you to have this as a token of my love.”*

And as he walked away the king said,

- *“I see how much you love me...*
- *so let me give you another whole acre*
- *next to your garden*
- *so that you can become a much greater gardener.”*

So, the gardener went home rejoicing.

And there was a nobleman in court who saw what happened, and he says,

- *“My goodness,*
- *if you get an acre for a carrot,*
- *what would you get for a horse?”*

And so, the next day he brought a horse, and said,

- *“I raise horses, oh king,*
- *and this is the greatest horse I have ever raised,*
- *and I want to give it to you as a token of my esteem and love.”*

But the king discerned his heart, and he says,

- *“Thank you very much,*
- *I’ll take the horse.”*

And he walked away with it.

- And the guy looked at him, baffled.
- And the king turned as said,

- *“Let me explain:*
  - *the gardener gave me the carrot...*
  - *but you are giving yourself the horse.”*

## TRANSITION

- So, these behaviors are carrots...not horses.
- They're what we do BECAUSE OF our great love for the king...

This paragraph gives a vice, and then a counterbalance virtue.

- I'm not going to commentate on every one,
- but I'll give a little more on some of them.

Verse 25:

## EPHESIANS 4:25

[25] Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

So, the vice here is falsehood vs. the virtue of speaking truth.

Christians should have a reputation for truthfulness.

Verse 26:

## EPHESIANS 4:26-27

[26] Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,  
[27] and give no opportunity to the devil.

## EXPLAIN: ANGER

Now, this is an interesting one...

because anger is mentioned here NOT as the vice...but the virtue.

- It doesn't say "*Don't be angry.*"
- It actually says, "be angry."
- But he commands you to be angry in a loving way.

There is sin that can come out of anger...but anger isn't the problem.

Anger is, in fact, a part of love.

- When you love something,
- you are angry at the thing that destroys it.

## ILLUSTRATION: HARPER

I am angry with my daughter when she does something sinful,

- such as lying
- or being deceptive.

Why?

- Because I know and hate
- the fruit that is wrought
- in a life lived like that.
  - I love her...
  - and I don't want her to experience life like that...
  - and so, I am angry.

## **EXPLAIN: SINFUL ANGER**

But the problem is our anger is often sinful.

And that usually shows up as SELFISH anger.

- We want to get them back for what they did to us.
  - They hit you...
    - so, we hit them back.
  - They hurt me...
    - but they'll get theirs!

Or, back to my daughter,

- I can become angry
  - not because I am genuinely concerned for her,
- but I'm more inconvenienced by her.
- It's selfish.
- And therefore, it's sin.

Verse 28:

## **EPHESIANS 4:28**

[28] Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

## **EXPLAIN: THIEVERY**

So, if a thief is converted to faith in Christ, it goes without saying that he should abandon the practice of stealing.

- But, he will NOT ONLY give up stealing:
  - but he will do what he can to earn an honest living...
    - so, get a job...
  - But then it culminates in becoming a generous person.

So, it goes from stealing, to working, to sharing.

### **ILLUSTRATION: HANDBAG**

Now, I recently heard a story about the persecuted church in Iran.

- This is a very underground network of house churches.

And one of the strategies for how the Iranian church does evangelism...

- is they smuggle New Testaments into the country.
- And then each week at a house church,
  - there will be a little pile of New Testaments,
  - with a phone number inside
- And each member can take seven New Testaments,
- and their goal is to give one out each day,
  - that is, share the gospel with one person each day.

Well, I heard a story from just a few months ago.

- A lady called saying she found the New Testament
  - with the phone number in it...
  - and called.
- And she talked with a woman...
  - and the woman on the phone led her to Christ...
  - and then began to disciple her.



And a few weeks later, this new Christian lady says,

- *“Do you want to know how I found the New Testament?”*
- *Well, I’m a handbag thief.*
  - *I’m a single mother with three kids.*
  - *No one to provide for us.*
- *And so, I’ve been stealing six or seven handbags per day.*
- *And I stole one handbag a couple weeks ago,*
  - *and there was no money in there,*
  - *but there was this New Testament.*
    - *So, I started to read it...*
    - *and then I called you.*
- *And now that I’ve become a follower of Jesus...*
  - *I’ve only stolen one handbag...*
  - *so that’s progress!*

How incredible is that? The new life of Christ changes us!

Verse 29:

### **EPHESIANS 4:29-30**

[29] Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. [30] And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

## EXPLAIN

Now, this prohibition of corrupting talk DOES mean obscene vulgarity,

- cussing, ok...
- but it also includes slanderous talk.
- Contemptuous talk.
- Gossiping.
- And the like.

Christians ought to repent concerning every careless word.

Words that help to build up the life in Christ

- are a powerful instrument of the Holy Spirit.

But on the other hand, words that endanger the unity of the body of Christ

- “grieve” the Holy Spirit.

Verse 31:

## EPHESIANS 4:31-32

[31] Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. [32] Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

## EXPLAIN

These final verses are really like a behavioral junk drawer...

- With many different vices
  - (malice, wrath, bitterness)
- and following virtues
  - (kindness, forgiveness, tenderness).

## CONCLUSION

So, those are the behaviors.

And if we're honest...and I know this is church, it's no place to be honest...

But if we're honest...we might read that list and think:

- *"I struggle with that.*
- *And I struggle with that.*
- *I struggle with those sins.*
  - *Sometimes I slip.*
  - *Sometimes I fall.*
  - *Sometimes I grow cold.*
- *Does that mean I'm not saved?*
- *Does that mean I'm still wearing my grave clothes?*
- *Does that mean I'm not wearing the new-self?"*

Well, even the greatest Bible characters fall back into old sinful habits...

sometimes really bad ones...

- Peter denied Jesus three times in the space of an evening.
- One of Paul's travelling companions,
  - a guy named John Mark,
  - abandoned the mission field because it got difficult.
- King David committed adultery,
  - murdered,
  - lied about it,
  - and refused to repent for nearly a year.

- Abraham doubted God so severely
  - that he told another man
  - his wife was his sister
  - just to save his own skin!

Listen, as a believer,

- you will struggle with residual sin...
  - with the old self...
- for the rest of your life.

But the question is, what do you do when you fall?

- Do you repent to God?
- Do you return to him?
- Or do you run away from him?

## ENDING

Let me end with this:

- after Peter denied Jesus three times...
  - and then watched
  - as the savior of the world
  - was unjustly crucified...

We get this little verse in John 21:

**SLIDE WITH PADS JOHN 21:3a**

[3] Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing."

Now fishing was what Peter did before Jesus called him.

- So, he we have Peter...
  - depressed over his failure...
  - discouraged by the death of his friend...
  - distraught over what to do next in life...
- deciding to go back to his pre-Jesus life.
- He's putting back on the old self.

That ever happened to you?

But the verse continues...

### **SLIDE JOHN 21:3**

[3] Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

See, he went back to his old life...

- but it wasn't the same anymore.
- He fished all night and caught nothing.

How about that? Been there?

- You're discouraged spiritually,
- so, you go back to your old life,
- but it just doesn't satisfy the same way it used to...

You go all night at your old ways and you get NOTHING out of it!

That's that temptation!

- Those grave clothes were comfortable.
- The old self is so easy to return to.
- The comfort of fishing will beckon.

Returning to who you were is a great temptation.

But I say it all the time...

- You don't have to do the things you used to do...
- because you aren't the same person you used to be.

**That is not the way you learned Christ!**

- Have you learned Christ?
- Have you received him?
- This is of utmost importance.

He says, *"You, follow me!"*

- Repent!
- Run to him.
- Return to him.

God help us! Let's pray.

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

## RESOURCES USED:

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