

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of 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.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So 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.

Date: November 1, 2009

Title: Filled to the Overflow - 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.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

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Introduction:

"This is the second of five sections (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15) delineated by the use of **peripateo** 'walk' in conjunction with the inferential conjunction **oun**, 'therefore.'"¹ To live like you are still **in Adam** is to live in a manner that is not suitable to our compatible with your **in Christ** state, thus the call.

There is a natural relationship between solidarity (i.e. unity) and sanctity (i.e. holiness). If the sins noted in 4:17-32 are present, then unity will not be present. The sins of 4:17-32 are sins against the body of Christ.

I struggle with our common understanding of holiness. It speaks to separation. Yet our passage speaks to a purity that is seen in one's behavior and thought. It ranges from something as tangible as stealing and as elusive as emotion.

As believers we are transformed from what we once were in Adam to what we now are in Christ. Our daily walk reflects this new position. As Christians we have put off our old identity in Adam and have put on our new identity in Christ. The work of God in Christ and through the Holy Spirit is the tree from which the fruit of biblical unity and holiness are produced.

If God's program is toward the unity of His body, then what we are about to see are those things that hinder relational unity. In verses 1-16 the Christian walk is to be compatible with or suitable to Christ. This shows itself in unity. With verses 17-32 the apostle again states the standard. Believers are not to walk as the unbelieving walk. Those attitudes and actions that once characterized our **in Adam** identity have been dealt with judicially at the cross. The people of God, His body, are to look like Him.

If I was a dog I would look and act like a dog. For a dog to be a dog is nothing strange. If my identity was sourced in who I was in Adam, then I would act and behave like my old sinful fallen nature. But 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 than a dog acting like a squirrel or a cat or a monkey.

The call to be what we are is most honorable as against demanding and burdensome. What do I mean by this? As a parent I would often expect my child to act like an adult. The problem was my child was incapable of acting like an adult because he was still a child. I was asking of him something that he was not capable of doing. God on the other hand calls us to put off the

old and put on the new and the reason being is because in Christ we have already put off the old and have already put on the new. So the command is simply calling us to be what we are.

A Christ-life puts these things off. These things are deceitful lusts and corrupt the old self/man (v.22). The old man is put off as we are made new in the attitude of our minds. The law of replacement replaces the old with the new. There is no ground for neutrality. "Paul has just discussed unity and maturity as twin goals for the church, which God has brought into existence through the death of Christ. He now goes on to show that purity is also essential among those who belong to Him."²

"You can't alter behavior without changing the mind. And you won't change the behavior unless you change the heart and mind."³ Verses 17 through 24 addresses a change of mind/heart and verses 25-32 shows what this looks like in the church.

Prior to the redemption from sin's debt and the adoption of sons and daughters all that Paul says in 4:17-22 is true of the unredeemed.

The Storyline:

What God has done in and through His church is immeasurable. From the tree of Calvary flows the fruit of unity and purity/holiness. Because the church is His body it can be nothing less than who He is. The Church of Christ is Christ. Our present passage shows us a picture of Christ. He is everything we are called to be and do.

The Problem:

We continue to separate who we are **in Christ** from what we look like in the ebb and flow of life. The invitation to lay aside falsehood is simply a call to reveal what we already are. None of the qualities noted in verses 25-32 that are positive are capable of existing apart from Christ. They are His qualities to be revealed in human flesh by the working of the Holy Spirit.

Questions:

1. What is v.17?
2. What immediately strikes you in v.17?
3. What type of audience was Paul addressing?
4. How does Paul describe the walk of the unsaved?
5. What are these verses doing?
6. Notice the areas identified by the apostle.
7. How does the unsaved man exhibit an intellect that is devoid of truth or logic?
8. What is v.20 doing?
9. What is the idea behind "learned"?
10. What is this section of verses doing?
11. What are we told to do in v.22?
12. What is the "old man"?
13. Why are we told to put him off?
14. What is verse 23 telling us to do?
15. Why are we to be renewed "in the spirit of your mind"?

16. What is verse 24 telling us to do?
17. What is the “new man”?
18. Why is it telling us to do this?
19. When we speak of the old man and the new man are we talking about the rebirth of the old man into the new?
20. What is meant by nature?
21. If our new nature is God given, then how is it that we continue to sin? Can the new nature sin?
22. Is the old nature perfectible in any way?
23. If the new nature cannot sin and thus is perfect, how does the believer grow in holiness?
24. What are verses 25 through 32 doing?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know how life in Christ changes everything about us.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose to live in a manner that is suitable to our **in Christ** position.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in the power of the tree to produce its nature in tangible fruit.

Outline:

- I. A description of who you once were in Adam (vv. 17-19)

Paul reminds his audience of what they once were apart from Christ. Let go of your former way of life that existed outside of a covenant relationship with God, and now put on those qualities that readily identify you as a part of the covenant people **in Christ**. This unity is possible only as we put off our old manner of life and put on the new manner of life received in Christ by the Holy Spirit, and this happens as our minds are renewed with the truth presented in chapters one through three.

The construction is not telling them to stop what they are currently doing but rather to remind them of what they once were. This is what the non-redeemed look like. Those who have not been adopted by the Father as sons and daughters are still the fatherhood of Satan (John 8:44). As painful as all of this is, if the Holy Spirit has opened your mind to this truth I pray you run to Jesus for the adoption He freely offers.

Notice the areas identified by the apostle: the mind, understanding, heart, and feeling. I do not know if there is an intended progression, but I do not like the outcome. The unsaved have an unrestricted morality that is scheming and sickening. It is interesting that in descriptions of depravity you always have sexual debauchery and decadence.

- A. His nature (vv. 17, 18)

1. 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.”⁴ 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. . .”). There is emptiness to the conclusion drawn by those who do not and will not acknowledge God. Because there is no fear of God within their thinking, they have no wisdom (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10). This is the manner of life that characterizes the unbelieving.

2. 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.

“to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:18).

“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and **their foolish heart was darkened**” (Rom. 1:21).

Apart from Christ, their understanding is without light. How does the unsaved man exhibit an intellect that is devoid of truth or logic? Let me suggest four ways: (1) seeing is believing, thus there is a denial of all that is spiritual; (2) if it feels good do it, thus there is no self restraint or objective standard for right and wrong; (3) a fixation with the temporal, thus there is a denial of the eternal, and (4) a demanding of rights, thus there is a denial of servitude.

3. Alienated lives

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.”⁵ It is the same word used in Ephesians 1:12 (“remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, **excluded from** the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world”) and in Colossians 1:21 (“And although you were formerly **alienated** and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds”).

4. Hardened hearts

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. “[It] signifies a thickening of the outward skin of any particular part, especially on the hands and feet, by repeated exercise or use, through which such parts are rendered insensible.”⁶

B. His practice (v. 19)

1. Calloused of conscience (v. 19)

Here the idea of insensitivity is heightened. This is the consequence of the hardness noted in verse 18. Like the darkness and the alienation so also the insensitivity. It is habitual and marks the state of the unbelieving. "The translation 'past feeling' expresses the sense accurately. The lack of moral feeling and discernment means that inability to exercise any restraint."⁷ This is why the following thought is true: "The word which Paul uses for the petrifying of their hearts is grim and terrible. It is **porosis**. [It comes from a word] which originally meant a stone that was harder than marble. It came to have certain medical uses. It was used of the callus that forms where a bone has been broken and re-set, a callus which is harder than the bone itself."⁸

2. Captivated by impurity (v. 19)

This is the outcome of their calloused existence. Their existence is marked by an "insatiable craving greed, consuming ambition, giving reign to appetites and desires which are against the laws of God and man."⁹ This idea finds fuller exposure in Romans 1. They are neither master nor lord, but mere pawns to their fleshly appetites. Theirs is a tragic existence whose end is marked by an eternal alienation from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

"They have abandoned themselves to every kind of unclean conduct in the insatiable lust of their desires."¹⁰ It describes a person who no longer cares who sees him or if he is caught.

Sin's appetite hungers for more and more and is never satisfied. This involves the absence of moral restraint, especially in the area of sexual sins. They gave themselves over into the power of lasciviousness in order to work all uncleanness with greediness (read the NIV).

3. Corrupted through deceitful desires (v. 23b)

Again, this statement marks the ongoing state of those who are apart from Christ. "The whole character representing the former self was not only corrupt but growing ever more and more corrupt. Every trait of the old man's behavior is putrid, crumbling, or inflated like rotting waste or cadavers, stinking, ripe for being disposed of and forgotten."¹¹

"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 who se life they injured and whose innocence they destroyed so long as these desires were satisfied."¹²

There is a contrast noted between what we once were in Adam and what we now are in Christ. The contrast between verses 17-19 and 20-21 is direct. We have been taught the truth, thus we more than anyone else are without excuse. Herein is our problem. We know what is right, but fail to appropriate the truth into the way we live.

The fruit produced by the unbelieving is a natural consequence of their **in Adam** standing. They can do nothing less than this. Yet those who are **in Christ** still sin. This sin is a result of the old in Adam self. But it is no longer the tree that it once was. This tree has been given a fatal blow at Calvary. It is no longer capable of producing, in quantity or kind, the toxic fruit of sin. There is a new tree growing in the believing from the seed of God and it is this tree of life that now produces the fruit of the Holy Spirit (1 John 3:9).

II. A description of who you now are in Christ (vv. 20-32)

Everything we once were in Adam we no longer are in Christ.

A. Our position (vv. 20-24).

1. The foundation (vv. 20, 21).

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 at our moment of faith.

2. The explanation (vv. 22-24).

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."¹³

Although the put off and put on are historical facts, the renewal of the mind is constant. How do we connect these actions in our daily choices? "In 4:22-24 Paul speaks of the daily struggle against the shackles of the 'Old Man' and of the uninterrupted groping for the 'New.' He is confident that now the 'sealing with the Spirit' will prove effective."¹⁴

1. Put off what you once were (v. 22)

What is the "old man"? The old man is our fallen sinful nature. The old man caters to our fleshly appetites. It is what we once were in Adam. It is what created our identity before God. Why are we told to put him off? Because he is governed by deceitful lusts and thus corrupted. The judicial death of this old self happened at Calvary. We live out this truth experientially as we renew our minds of Christ.

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

Why "in the spirit of your mind"? Because the mind is the (1) collector, (2) processor and (3) discerner of information and life's patterns. Consider the exhortations of Romans 12:2 and 1 Peter 1:13. It is only as we "**learn Christ**" that we can begin to kill the deeds of the body and

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

3. Put on the new self (v. 24)

This is the positive side of v. 22. It is used in the sense of putting on a garment. Regeneration restores what man possessed by creation - in practice the image of God in man is being renewed.

What is verse 24 telling us to do? We are told to put on the new self. What is the “new man”? The new man is our new God-given nature. When we speak of the old man and the new man are we talking about the rebirth of the old man into the new? No, the two still exist side by side. 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). 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 to be seen in its manifestation in daily life and in the putting to death the old nature.

This is something that is “already,” although “not yet.” I rest knowing the victory is sure, but strive to enter into it experientially.

B. Our practice [vv25-32])

When man makes a god he makes the god with the same character flaws and base appetites as himself. When God makes an individual He makes the individual in His likeness. What we see is a picture of God on the canvass of human existence.

Through this paragraph you have a distinct pattern of (1) put off, (2) put on, and (3) why? v25; vv.26, 27; v28; vv29, 30; vv31, 32. What are verses 25 through 32 doing? It is showing the believer how to put to death the one and manifest the other.

This is what the letting go and putting on activity looks like. This is the kind of relationship that should exist inside of the **one new man** existence, between the Jew and Gentile.

<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)

The qualities we are called upon to manifest are the result of our being in Christ. What if our God exhibited falsehood or was unjustly angry or took what was not His or used degrading

speech or perpetually provoked His people to discouragement or was unkind and malicious? God is simply inviting us to be what we are. Since we are His body, is it of little wonder that He is asking us to be the body.

1. Put away falsehood (v. 25)

"Putting away lying" = Laying aside conscious and intentional falsehood (4:15). The thought of neighbor is life within the community of faith. We should speak to others as we desire to be spoken to.

2. Do not be angry (v. 26)

"Be ye angry, and sin not" = this speaks to bad temper and irritability. "But there is an anger without which the world would be a poorer place."¹⁵ It is the type of anger that moves one to righteous acts.

"John Wesley said: 'Give me a hundred men who fear nothing but God, and who hate nothing but sin, and who know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, and I will shake the world.'¹⁶

The devil ("slanderer") delights in dividing the body of Christ. He wishes nothing more than **to crush the conciliation secured by the cross.**

3. Stop stealing (v. 28)

"Let him that stole steal no more" = cease an action that is already in progress and take full responsibility for the duties in one's life. Paul does not simply say work in order to meet your needs. He says work "so that you may have something to share with anyone in need." "Here is a new idea and a new ideal - that of working in order to give away. The Christian ideal is that we work, not to amass things, but to be able, if need be, to give them away."¹⁷

4. Stop corrupt speech (v. 29)

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth" = Foul, unwholesome, rotten communication (i.e., rotten, spoiled fruit and vegetables). Corrupt communication attacks and tears others. This exhortation is that one is to develop speech that is wholesome, gracious, and appropriate in order to build up one another.

5. Do not grieve (v. 30)

Anything that divides the unity inside the community by the cross grieves the Holy Spirit. The reason why we should not grieve the Holy Spirit is because we have been sealed by Christ with the Holy Spirit and He is now the guarantee that what God has begun in redeeming and adopting His sons and daughters, He will finish (1:12, 13).

The Holy Spirit is grieved when we reject His word and cause disunity within the one new man, the household of God. All of the negatives contribute to disunity and grieve the Holy Spirit. All of the positives move toward unity within the one new man. If this is not present in the people of God, then what hope does the unbelieving community have? We are to be His hands, His feet, and His mouthpiece in speaking peace to one another and to those outside the community of faith.

6. Put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander and malice (v. 31)

“Bitterness speaks to long standing resentment, as the spirit which refuses to be reconciled.”¹⁸ Wrath and anger speak to outbreaks of passion and long lived anger. Clamor is loud talking and slander is insulting language. If you find your voice rising when in conflict, then it is time to step away.

7. Put on kindness and forgiveness (v. 32)

This is one of the greatest verses in the entire Bible. No matter how fretful others treat you, forgive them. No matter how unjustly you suffer, forgive them. No matter how grossly misunderstood and unfairly treated, forgive them. Whoever it is that you must forgive do so without delay. 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. There is nothing less than this and there is nothing more than this.

Shepherding the Sheep: (What’s the NEXT STEP?)

1. The reader should know what “old man”, “new man” and “being renewed” mean.
2. The reader should understand how the various parts fit together.
3. The reader should apply the principle of renewal in his own life in order to put off the old and to put on the new.
4. What does Paul wish the reader to do? What does a Christ-life look like?
5. The reader should put off the old man and his sinful ways.
6. The reader should put on the new man and his righteous ways.
7. The reader should seek to be made new in the attitude of his mind through a systematic approach to Bible study.
8. Are we truly concerned about being one with fellow believers (vv. 1-16)? It is impossible to have wide scale unity, yet we can have unity within our class body, student body, family and church.
9. What are you doing to build up the body of fellow Christians in your circle of influence (vv.17-32)?
10. How well are we manifesting the new man and putting to death the old (2 Cor. 5:17)?
11. Paul fully expects the Ephesian believer to walk in a way that is both compatible with the Lord Jesus and distinctly different than that of the unsaved. Today, how are we doing?

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- ¹ Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 581.
- ² NIV Study Bible
- ³ N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 51.
- ⁴ Rogers and Rogers, 441.
- ⁵ Rogers and Rogers, 441.
- ⁶ Adam Clarke's *Commentary on Ephesians 4:18*.
- ⁷ Rogers and Rogers, 441.
- ⁸ William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 152.
- ⁹ Rogers and Rogers, 442.
- ¹⁰ William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 153.
- ¹¹ Rogers and Rogers, 442.
- ¹² William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 153, 154.
- ¹³ Markus Barth, *The Anchor Bible, Ephesians 4-6*, 503.
- ¹⁴ Markus Barth, *The Anchor Bible, Ephesians 4-6*, 545.
- ¹⁵ William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 155.
- ¹⁶ William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 156.
- ¹⁷ William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 158.
- ¹⁸ William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 159.