

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The word of God for this morning is found in the epistle to the Ephesians 4:17-24.

**“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.”**

So far our text. Dear fellow redeemed of God.

Have you ever heard the phrase “The clothes make the man?” There is a bit more to the Mark Twain’s quote but the way this particular quote is used these days one would likely never know this. I remember being a kid on the playground, being teased because of the clothes that I had on. Junior High (what is now called middle school) and especially High School were places that you were open to sure attacks if you weren’t wearing the latest fashion. Being part of a certain crowd was partially established by the kind of clothing you wore. What parent wasn’t adamant about making sure to dress a certain way for a job interview.

I remember going to one job interview back in North Dakota on a humid 100+ degree day in a suite and sweating profusely because of it. I was apologetic because I felt like I was blowing the interview because I was sweating so badly. I regretted wearing that stupid suite. But the interviewer told me that people had been coming in flip-flops and shorts and had no chance of getting the job because of what it showed him about who they were. Clothes certainly do reflect upon the attitude of a person.

When we come forth from the womb we are naked. We don’t have a stitch of clothing on. But as we find from our text today we are clothed by our sin. But we also find in our text for today that **“You have been clothed in Christ.”**

Even before the day of our birthday mankind is bound by sin. From our conception we’ve inherited the sinfulness of our original mother and father Adam and Eve. It is important in light of our text to be reminded of this. Our text specifically is talking to people who were new converts to the Gospel of Christ. The understanding they had of religion was a pagan one most likely involving the temple of Artemis also called the temple of Diana. In this temple one would find prostitutes serving this so-called goddess of fertility.

We can see therefore why the Apostle Paul has this admonition for the Ephesian Christians, **“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.”**

Another way of saying this is stop behaving like the world. The Ephesians were so used to acting in a certain way that it would likely take them a while to learn to stop doing such things. I know that visiting people who have been in another religion for most of their lives have a tendency of reverting back to the basic teachings of that religion. Ex-Catholics have a very hard time giving up the work righteous attitude that they were taught.

What about ourselves? What is our Temple of Diana? What is that thing that we always have a tendency to revert back to? Although we share the condemnation of the Law equally amongst one another, each of us likely bears a slightly different problem.

Are you struggling with sexual issues? Are you suffering from issues with anger? Are you envious? Are you a gossip? Are you prideful? Are you a liar? Do you esteem some more than others?

The Devil is hard at work to revert your mind back to the way it is by nature. Paul says that we naturally have our understanding darkened. We alienate ourselves from God because the Law hurts us by nature because it goes against what feels good to the flesh. We even get to the point where we are past feeling. The word here is better understood as being callous. When the skin is worked over and over we get a callous. A callous has no feeling. Satan would love to have us back to being dead towards God.

If you believe that you are, then I have the same response to you that Paul had for the Ephesians, **“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.”** What can we say when we claim to be Christian yet continue to sin. Have even we learned Christ this way? Of course we haven't if we ourselves have truly heard Him as being the bearer of the truth.

But you might ask yourself, how can any man be free from sin? Doesn't everyone suffer from temptation and often fall into them? Yes. We do. And if you ask this in the hopes of having the guilt removed instead of justifying yourself, then be reminded **“You have been clothed in Christ.”** Paul told the Ephesians to **“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.”**

The absolute only way that sinful, corrupt mankind can be clothed in Christ is to have a change occur. Our text says to be renewed in the spirit and to put on the new man who was created in God in righteousness and holiness. Paul is simply saying believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Putting on the new man as found in our text is a word that actually describes the changing of one's clothing. How we are dressed before the Lord will make all the difference on the day we stand before Him at judgment. We will either be clothed in Christ or we won't.

If we try to stand before the Lord with our own righteous we will fail without question. We would hear from the Lord **“Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”** (Mat. 25:41)

But being clothed in the righteousness and holiness of Christ you will hear with certainty, **“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”** (Mat. 25:34)

You my dear friends have been clothed in Christ when water was poured on your head and the word of God was spoken creating faith in your heart clothing you in the righteousness of Christ.

You have been clothed in Christ when you heard the word during devotions in your homes growing up. Hearing that, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”** (John 3:16)

You have been clothed in Christ when you take up the Scriptures for yourself, desiring to be comforted by the word of reconciliation. **“That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”** (2 Cor. 5:19)

You have been clothed in Christ as you were trained up in Catechism class, further preparing you to lead a Christian adult life.

You have been clothed in Christ every time you come to the Lord’s Supper believing that in, with and under the bread and the wine you receive the true body and blood of your Lord Jesus Christ.

And you have been clothed in Christ because of the love of God. The only God of the world has loved all of us greatly through Jesus Christ. And He has loved us by creating faith in our hearts in Jesus Christ, clothing you in His righteousness and holiness. Praise be to God. Amen.