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Sermon Notes

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No Longer Living the Dark Life

Ephesians 4:17-24

Every Christian is a miracle of grace... radically transformed by the sovereign grace of God! Few passages in the Bible so clearly describe the desperate darkness of life apart from Christ as this one. And few so clearly depict the absolute necessity for all Christians to live out day by day a clearly transformed life by the power of God.

These verses are foundational to the witness God wants FBC Durham to have in this community.

America is becoming more and more pagan before our very eyes... the corruption of spiritual darkness is plainly on display around us, and it will almost certainly accelerate in our lifetime, and in our children's, if the Lord doesn't return soon.

This land needs us to be radiant lights shining in the darkness... and the only way that will happen is if we obey Paul's sharp commands here... his sharp, clear commands to STOP LIVING as the pagans do, as we used to... to PUT OFF our old selves, to be MADE NEW in our minds, and to PUT ON the new self... this passage stands over us almost two thousand years after Paul wrote it, speaking with FRESHNESS and POWER for the church of Jesus Christ to LIVE HOLY LIVES before an increasingly dark and desperate world.

Context:

Paul is writing this grand, glorious letter to the Ephesian Christians... Ephesus was in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey; it was a thoroughly PAGAN place, which housed one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World... the majestic Temple of Artemis, a center of idolatrous pagan worship to the goddess of the hunt, the goddess of forests and hills, the goddess of fertility, protector of women... Gentile worshippers came from all over the Roman Empire to indulge in sexual immorality

Some historians list it as one of the most licentious cities in Asia Minor. The temple of Artemis was a major center of this debauchery and wickedness.

Like most pagan worship rituals, the worship of Artemis was an extension of man's own inner darkness and perversions. Male and female roles were interchanged; orgies, child molestation, homosexuality, bestiality, and all other manner of perversions were daily occurrences. Countless temple prostitutes, male and female, plied their trade to the thousands of lust-filled people that made their way to the Great Temple of Artemis every day.

The fifth-century Greek philosopher Heraclitus referred to Ephesus as "the darkness of vileness." And he said "The morals were lower than animals, and the inhabitants of Ephesus were only fit to be drowned." THAT WAS WHERE THIS NEW CHURCH of recently converted Christians was established.

And we American Christians are aware at how little has changed... the depravity of the human heart can only be transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1-3: the salvation God has worked in Christ, seen from 100,000 feet up... satellite view, looking down... God's eternal plan, from before the foundation of the world:

Ephesians 1:4 he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

HOLY AND BLAMELESS IN HIS SIGHT! That was God's eternal, his ultimate purpose for every Christian!!

To that end, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. The Ephesian Christians were predestined in Christ:

Ephesians 1:4-5 In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-

All sins were forgiven by the atoning work of Christ:

Ephesians 1:7-8 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

They were saved by hearing the gospel proclaimed and believing it:

Ephesians 1:13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit

Now, Paul is addressing the Ephesian Christians concerning their LIFESTYLE:

Ephesians 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

He's already talked about their UNITY in Christ... that they should make every effort to protect it

Then he talked about their DIVERSITY in Christ... their spiritual gifts, given by Christ to build the Body of Christ to FULL MATURITY:

Ephesians 4:13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:15 speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

It is in this context that Paul now addresses many other aspects of their Christian lives... beginning with a powerful call to WALK IN HOLINESS:

Ephesians 4:17-24 Therefore, I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 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. 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. ²⁰ You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. ²¹ Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

I. From Now On... Live a Different Life! (vs. 17)

Ephesians 4:17 Therefore I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

A. "Therefore" or "So"... links this command to the practical issues of living a life worthy of our calling... AND to the concept of FULL MATURITY in Christ

1. Also it shows the indispensable link between DOCTRINE and PRACTICE...
2. The image of the ministry of the word of God and how it causes us to GROW UP INTO THE HEAD, Christ, is powerful... maturity comes from the WORD
3. But it is not enough merely to hear the word of God... we MUST live it out!

4. The Greek verb is WALK... it's a daily life issue... walking day after day in our calling to be holy as Christ is holy

B. Personal Holiness Confirms Salvation

1. One of the great complaints against the gospel is it all seems TOO EASY
2. The serial murderer on death row can make some kind of profession of faith in Jesus and receive full forgiveness for all sins
3. The cynical, skeptical world says, "Yeah... right!" It understands a morality that comes by hard work, in which people EARN their standing by their own efforts
4. But salvation given by grace through faith seems too easy, too glib, too cheap
5. But SALVATION by FREE GRACE, through faith in Christ is exactly what Paul is teaching!!

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

6. Full forgiveness of our past, present, and future sins must always be by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and no other way
7. BUT the true gospel of Christ doesn't stop there... our salvation is CONFIRMED day after day by progressive holiness... a life of holiness always accompanies true justification
8. The doctrine of the gospel works a radical change in every aspect of life
9. And without this change, we can definitely say there is no saving faith

James 2:14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?

James 2:26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort ... to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

C. The Radical Change of Conversion

1. We MUST no longer live like we used to!!
2. Paul is instructing them as to the RADICAL CHANGE that has come over them in their souls... and that must now be lived out in daily life habits

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Later, Paul will say this:

Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light

D. Powerful Command... Not an Option

1. Paul is very STRONG with these Ephesian Christians here

^{ESV} Ephesians 4:17 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.

2. He is pulling rank as an Apostle... they MUST NOT live that life anymore!

3. The days of visiting the Temple of Artemis must end FOREVER!

4. The days of drunkenness, brawling, slander, stealing, lying, cheating must END IMMEDIATELY!

5. So Paul asserts this command with the authority of the Lord Jesus... he solemnly swears this command effectively comes from Jesus Christ himself

6. Those days for you are over forever!!

1 Peter 4:3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do-- living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.

We Christians were no different than the pagans... we were just like them, doing the exact same things... but the time has come to stop RIGHT NOW!

That's the sense of urgency Paul is pressing on their consciences...

Romans 8:13-14 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

II. The Darkness of Life Apart from Christ (vs. 17-19)

Ephesians 4:17-19 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 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. 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.

A. Powerfully Clear Depiction of the Darkness of Life Apart from Christ

1. This is something Paul already described in some sense earlier in Ephesians 2:1-3

Ephesians 2:1-3 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

2. The condition of the lost has not changed ONE BIT in two thousand years... the exact same conditions of the heart exist now as then
3. Paul had also traced this out very plainly in Romans 1

Romans 1:18-25 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. ²⁴ ¶ Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised. Amen.

4. aa

B. Darkened Hearts

1. Paul zeroes in especially on the darkness of their THINKING, of their HEARTS
2. He begins by speaking of the FUTILITY of their thinking

Ephesians 4:17 you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

3. The work “futile” means vanity, emptiness, worthlessness of the way pagans think
 - a. People seeking for purpose, meaning from life and finding NOTHING

b. They are looking for a THRILL...

Acts 17:21 All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.

1 Corinthians 15:32 "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

c. Problem of reason for existence... purpose in life... inevitability of death...
no SOLUTIONS to all this... just VANITY

d. People are ROAMING restlessly like Satan and the demons

Job 1:7 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

Matthew 12:43 "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it."

Isaiah 57:20-21 But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. ²¹ "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

This FUTILITY of their thinking leads to this worthless way of life...

4. Perhaps these enlightened, Greek-speaking people, instructed by the height of Greek philosophy like Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato, who had display such astonishing architectural knowledge by designing and building the Temple of Artemis, would have taken offense at Paul's assertion of their FUTILE thinking
5. So would our modern age as well
 - a. We are VERY IMPRESSED with what the human mind has achieved
 - b. The ability to put men on the moon and return them safely to earth has fed our overweening pride
 - c. Since that time, we have seen the explosion of the digital age, the age of electronics, and all that that has meant
 - d. We have seen medical science achieve incredible advances in cures for various types of cancer, of terrifying illnesses like AIDS... surely our thinking is FAR from FUTILE
6. God is NOT IMPRESSED by our science, or our technology, or our literature or arts or anything... he knows what we can do, for he made us:

Genesis 11:6 The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.

7. BUT we are still DARKENED in our minds, and our thinking is futile... vanity
8. The German nation was the most technologically advanced in the world prior to World War II
 - a. They had the best physicists, including Albert Einstein and Max Planck, as well as Werner Heisenberg and Erwin Shrödinger
 - b. They were leading the world in the study of electromagnetic radiation, leading to modern telecommunications... they had the best rocket scientists in the world, and some of the best mathematicians and chemists
 - c. They were leading the world in aviation, which Charles Lindbergh clearly saw in the 1920s/30s...
 - d. Yet within 15 years, all of German was a smoldering ruin, a bombed-out pile of rubble
 - e. They were BRILLIANT thinkers, but DARKENED in their hearts
 - f. Mere intelligence alone does not commend us

C. Paul Extends the Probing of the Unregenerate Heart

Ephesians 4:18-19 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. 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.

1. DARKNESS... the darkened state of their understanding
2. Every aspect of the inner workings of the heart are corrupted by sin
 - a. the understanding is corrupted
 - b. the affections (loves and hates) of the heart are perverted
 - c. the will is a slave to the corrupt heart and merely does its bidding
 - d. the thought life is darkened
 - e. the emotions are twisted

The intellect, reasoning, comprehension, conscience, affections, inclinations, memories, judgments... everything the HEART DOES is deeply darkened by sin

Illus. terrible flood in Bangladesh a number of years ago, corpses of people and animals floating... the septic system compromised so there was pollution floating in the flood... people's wells were FOULED as a result... the bacteria and filth was carried everywhere by the waters

So it is with the human heart

D. Cause for this Darkness: Separation from God

Ephesians 4:18 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.

1. Paul earlier said they are

Ephesians 2:12 without hope and without God in the world.

2. Separated from the LIFE OF GOD

- a. Though they are biologically alive, and God keeps them alive, they are spiritually dead (as Ephesians 2:1 said)
- b. The cause of all this darkness is JUDICIAL HARDENING by God
- c. They reject God, they do not know him, they do not love him...
IGNORANCE of God...

[Paul in Athens... greatly distressed at their overwhelming IDOLATRY] Acts 17:23
I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.

John 17:25 O righteous Father! The world has not known You!!

d. This is the essence of their death, for it is LIFE to know God:

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

3. Hardening of their hearts

- a. Sin has a terrible HARDENING effect on the human heart
- b. As we continue to live apart from God, we continue to sin more and more

c. This hardens the heart

1960, Abebe Bikila of Ethiopia won the Olympic Marathon in Rome running BAREFOOT... astonishingly tough calluses on his feet, built up over years of training

The HUMAN HEART can become HARDENED to God more and more; hardened = unresponsive... unable to feel pain, conviction of sin... the conscience becomes SEARED like someone's hand that has been severely burned and no longer has sensation

We read of doctors and nurses taking part in ABORTIONS; how the first time, they are very emotional; on doctor went home and threw up; a nurse wept uncontrollably; BUT after performing more and more abortions, and later and later term abortions, their emotions went away and they no longer felt anything

Their hearts were HARDENED... they were INSENSITIVE to the conscience... the conscience did not speak to them at all about their sin

It should HURT us to sin; we should FEEL GRIEF!! But the more we sin, the more insensitive our hearts become

This is the "heart of stone" that Ezekiel 36 speaks of

E. Increasing Lust for More

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.

1. The loss of sensitivity results in them GIVING THEMSELVES OVER to the sinful life more and more

In Romans 1, it is GOD who gives them over to sin

Here in Ephesians 4, it is the sinner who gives himself over to it

2. This is the insatiable nature of sin... there needs to be MORE and MORE sensation, more and more experiences, more and more of the drink or the drug or.... Edgier and edgier porn... wilder and wilder experiences...
3. Why? Because the sin is hardening the heart, but Satan is pushing them on to greater and greater addiction

C.S. Lewis: *Screwtape Letters*... older demon giving temptation advice to a younger demon... speaks of removing the pleasure of sin as quickly as possible...

“An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula.”

Paul has described the NON-CHRISTIAN with astonishing clarity

I must stop right now and plead with any that are here in this state... you KNOW this is true of you! I plead with you to COME TO CHRIST, the Savior!

Do you see the pattern of addiction in your life? The law of diminishing returns? The hardening of your heart, the searing of your conscience? Do you know that you are SEPARATE from the life of God? You are outside of Christ?

I plead with you to flee the wrath to come... and find forgiveness through simple faith in Christ....

Augustine, *Confessions*: “You have made us for yourself, O God, and the heart of man is restless till it finds its rest in you!”

This is exactly where Paul is going here in this passage as well:

III. How You Learned Christ (vs. 20-21)

Ephesians 4:20-21 *You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. ²¹ Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.*

A. Praise God for the Salvation Christ Has Worked in Us!!!

1. That Paul abruptly breaks his incisive probing of the unregenerate, pagan heart and addresses the Ephesian Christians so sweetly is unspeakable GRACE!
2. YOU, HOWEVER... are NOT INCLUDED in all that vanity, and darkness, and deadness, and increasing SIN
3. A decisive break was made in our case!

B. The Light of the Gospel

2 Corinthians 4:4 *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

God spoke into this Satanic darkness, this fog of sin and blindness... and he spoke the LIGHT of the GOSPEL:

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

C. We Did Not Learn Christ This Way!!

1. This is what was happening to us BEFORE the gospel came
2. So a radical transformation was given to us... the eyes of our hearts were enabled to SEE the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ
3. That light is the light of perfect PURITY and HOLINESS

1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

4. Now comes the corresponding command to walk in the light:

1 John 1:6-7 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

D. Paul Refers to the Hearing of the Gospel

1. Surely you HEARD HIM
 - a. How sweet is Paul's certainty that they heard Christ in the words of the gospel
 - b. Paul preached the gospel in Ephesus
 - c. He proclaimed that God had sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world
 - d. Christ lived a SINLESS LIFE... perfectly PURE from all evil
 - e. But he died an ATONING DEATH on the cross... by his blood, we are cleansed from all our sins
 - f. God raised Christ up from the grave on the third day, and ascended him to heaven
 - g. Now he dwells in UNAPPROACHABLE LIGHT... and will someday return to judge the living and the dead
 - h. This was the gospel Paul (and others) preached to the Ephesians

2. Grammatically... heard HIM...
 - a. SURELY you heard HIM
 - b. Not “heard of him” as though Jesus was merely a topic
 - c. They heard HIM speaking in the gospel

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

- d. Jesus was speaking directly to their hearts by the preaching of the gospel and by the application of the Holy Spirit
 - e. He was calling them OUT OF DARKNESS into his WONDERFUL LIGHT
 - f. O Ephesians, isn't this what you heard??
3. Not only in the initial preaching of the gospel, but in the ongoing teaching of Christ after that

Ephesians 4: 21 Surely you heard him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

- E. There was an ONGOING TEACHING of Holiness in Christ... that is the TRUTH in Jesus... that sin is darkness, it is poison, it is evil... and we MUST be holy as He is holy

Then Paul teaches them the constant three steps of sanctification: putting off, made new, putting on

This is the same three steps of daily sanctification for us as well!!

IV. The Basic Rhythm of Daily Sanctification (vs. 22-24)

Ephesians 4:22-24 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

- A. Three Steps, Repeated Continually
 1. PUT OFF the OLD MAN
 2. Be MADE NEW in the spirit of the mind

3. PUT ON the New Man

B. Examples Right in this Chapter

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

1. Example#1: Falsehood and truth-telling
 - a. Falsehood = lies, deception
 - b. That is part of the old life, the life we lived apart from Christ
 - c. BUT it is to be NO PART of the Christian life
2. We CAN'T merely be positive... speaking truthfully
3. If we mix truth with falsehood every day, the net effect is CORRUPT
4. So, we must PUT OFF falsehood, be MADE NEW in the spirit of our minds toward truth/falsehood, and PUT ON truthfulness
5. Example #2: stealing and hard work

Ephesians 4:28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

- a. PUT OFF: stealing
- b. BE MADE NEW IN THE SPIRIT OF THE MIND: about stealing and hard work
- c. PUT ON: hard work and benevolent charity to the needy
- d. CAN'T merely be positive or merely be negative... have to do BOTH

Imagine a thief not stopping stealing but adding hard work and gifts of charity to the poor... like ROBIN HOOD, "robbing the rich to give to the poor"... that is NOT the Christian life!!

6. Example #3: Speech

Ephesians 4:29 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.

- a. PUT OFF: unwholesome talk of every kind... slander, gossip, insults, arguments, verbal attacks, complaining

- b. BE MADE NEW IN THE SPIRIT OF THE MIND: about the tongue and how God wants us to use it
- c. PUT ON: a rich new pattern of speech in which we always and only BUILD UP people with our words

V. Applications

A. Non-Christians:

1. I have already called you to look at yourself in the mirror of the word
2. Do you see yourself in what Paul described here?

Ephesians 4:18-19 *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. 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.*

3. Do you see the enslavement of sin in your heart and lifestyle?
4. Do you realize that you cannot save yourself from this?
5. Do you hear that there IS a mighty Savior from sin??
6. Receive Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord!
7. Repent from sin, repent from this destructive pattern, see the beauty of a pure and holy life waiting for you

B. Christians

1. Understand this passage was written for US as Christians!!
2. WE are the ones who can see clearly what the life of the lost person was... because that was who we were! Who we still would have been if it hadn't been for the saving grace of Christ
3. Follow Paul's powerful appeal
 - a. Paul is pleading with us to LIVE A HOLY LIFE, a Christian life, radically different from the life of the non-Christian
 - b. He is yearning for us to see how corrupt that non-Christian life is MENTALLY, SPIRITUALLY, from the heart
 - c. He wants us to reject that old way of living... that we MUST be holy because God is holy

- d. That this holiness **MUST** come from within us, from our minds, from our hearts
 - e. That the former darkness of our minds and hearts must be transformed by the renewing of our minds by the Word of God
 - f. That God wants us to immerse ourselves daily in a steady stream of Scriptural truth
 - i) **STOP**: be honest with yourself... are you having a daily time in the Word?
 - ii) Are you feeding on God's Word every day?
 - iii) Do you feel its truth flowing in your heart throughout the day
 - iv) Is the life-giving stream of truth purifying old patterns of thinking resulting in a whole new way of life
 - (i) A new way of thinking about marriage? About parenting? About money? About sex? About pleasure? About time, and how you spend it? About church? About material possessions? About the poor and needy? About prayer?
 - (ii) Do you see a continual transformation happening in you by the powerful effects of the Word of God?
 - 4. Do you see the non-Christians around us more and more clearly by the light of this passage? Do you see so clearly how trapped they are in all of this... "Without hope and without God in the world?" "Enslaved to all kinds of passions and pleasures" "By nature, objects of wrath"?
 - 5. Does this motivate you to reach out to them with the gospel message? To brave a conversation at work, or at the mall, or in the stands watching your kid's basketball game with another parent?
 - 6. Are you hungry and thirsty for righteousness in your life? Does this passage make you want to grow in **HOLINESS** in the pattern of Christ?
- C. More next week on the three-step process of daily Christian growth
1. **PUT OFF** the old self
 2. **BE MADE NEW** in the spirit of your minds
 3. **PUT ON** the new self