

Walking Tall and Dressing Smart

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[0 : 00] So welcome to the next in our series on being transformed, being changed. And we continue our series. We're in Ephesians. We're going to continue in Ephesians. And we're going to look at two interesting things today, I think.

We're going to learn to be transformed is to walk tall and to dress smartly. I hope we'll get there. So just about walking properly.

It takes a human baby up to a year to learn to walk on his two legs, which is quite a long time compared to animals in the wild who, you know, they're up and running in only just a few hours. It takes babies even longer to learn how to dress properly. Some people never quite get there. But Christians, kind of like newborn babies, have to learn how to walk in a certain way.

And we have to learn how to dress ourselves in a certain way. And one of the Bible words for living a lifestyle is walking. You remember Psalm 1?

[1 : 04] Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked. The famous Psalm, Psalm 1. In Ephesians chapter 4, remember we started in Ephesians chapter 4 last week.

Some translations have walk in a manner worthy of the calling that you have received. Walk in a manner worthy of the calling that you have received.

And Ephesians chapter 4 starts the practical side of the book, of the letter that Paul has written to the church in Ephesus. The first half of the book, he's telling them all about how God has saved them and how he's loved them and how he's blessed them.

And how he's called Jew and Gentile together to be this new conglomerate, this new thing, this church, this thing that's going to change the world. And then he says, now that I've told you who you are, I want you to live in light of that.

So he talks about, some translations have it as walking. The ESV has walk in a manner worthy of the calling you've received. If you've got the NIV or some other translations, sometimes have live a life worthy of the calling that you've been called to.

[2 : 09] And that living and walking is the same thing. So when in the Bible, whenever you, not whenever, but you've got to check the context, but very often when it's telling you to walk in a certain way or not walk in a certain way, it's telling you how to live, what you're supposed to do with your time, how to live daily life.

And in our section today from verse 17, Paul tells the church they are no longer to walk as the Gentiles walk. The NIV says you're no longer to live as the Gentiles live.

So walking is an idiomatic expression of talking about how you live, the stuff you do on a daily basis. We're going to be walking the Christian walk our whole lives.

And the longer we walk, the more God wants us to get better at it. So we're going to look at how we can walk better today. Walk tall, walk straight, and how to dress ourselves, how to dress smart.

We need to learn to live how to do the Christian life well and how to do it properly. Yes, we've been transformed. We've received the Holy Spirit. We've been called to a new life.

[3 : 17] But we are also being transformed. And we want to learn how to do that well because we are part of the change process. Change doesn't just happen to us from God's side.

He expects us to respond and to do things according to what he's telling us to do. So the first thing that we're going to look at today is how not to walk. How not to walk.

And Paul in verse 17 to about verse 19 is telling us, Look, remember what you were like. I don't want you to live like that anymore. In fact, he's very emphatic about it.

He says it's a very emphatic statement, Paul says. So we'll look at verse 17. So he says, I tell you this. I'm being straight with you guys now. And insist on it in the Lord.

I insist on it that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do. Or you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do. In the futility of their minds.

[4 : 16] So there's something wrong with people who aren't Christians. Their mindset is broken. Their thinking isn't working properly. Look what it says about them. They're darkened in their understanding.

They can't see properly. They're alienated from the life of God. They're not close with God at all. Why? Because of the ignorance that's in them. Because they don't know stuff.

Where do they get this ignorance from? Why don't they know about God? Well, it's due to their own hardness of heart. There's not an ignorance that they can say, Oh, well, I didn't know. If you read Romans 1, Paul is emphatic, just as emphatic there.

People do know who God is. But they've turned from him because, the same thing here, of the hardness of their heart. Verse 19, they've become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

So they don't care about God. They've given themselves up to a lifestyle and they just keep going after that. So what Paul is saying to the church, this is not take it or leave it.

[5 : 17] Here's a bit of advice for you. This is life and death stuff. It's a command for us to live differently to how the world lives. To live like these people in verse 17 to 19 is to sleepwalk through life.

Has anyone seen anyone sleepwalk? It's dangerous. Because sometimes your eyes are open, but you're not seeing what's in front of you. Most of the time your eyes are closed.

And you're just walking and you don't know. You could walk off a balcony. You could end up in places you shouldn't end up. So when people sleepwalk or when you walk around being blinded, we all know what it's like to have the electricity off and there's no, you know, that few seconds when there's no light and you're blundering around trying to look for something.

The problem with that is you can hurt yourself. And you can hurt others. But it's no accident that these people are like this. They've become like that because their hearts are hardened against God.

And against living a life that is any meaning beyond their own comfort and pleasure. So what happens with people who live like this, who walk in this way, their search for meaning and significance turns in on itself.

[6 : 30] They can't think of anything beyond their own feelings, their own immediate wants and desires, their own immediate pleasure or comfort. And so all that's left to them is to live a life totally focused on their own wants, their own feelings, their own desires, their own fears, their own anxieties.

And they can't escape that. And they'll snatch at anything that makes them feel, well, like they've got feelings. Because you notice they've got a hard heart that's become calloused.

There's a lack of feeling in people who are not connected to God. Living a life like this, you end up chasing after your own tail the whole time. And it's exhausting and it's meaningless because you don't get anywhere.

All you do is leave a trail of destruction in your wake, a trail of broken relationships and broken promises, a chasing after the wind, as the writer to Ecclesiastes says. That's not a life, it's a living death.

You don't want to be trapped in that cycle of despair. So that's first of all, Paul says, don't walk like this anymore. You guys, he's talking to the church in Ephesus. They've all come out of that lifestyle.

[7 : 38] This is the first brand new Christians that have happened in that part of the world. They come out of a pagan lifestyle, so they know all too well what Paul is talking about. But what about us? Well, if you find yourself trapped in this kind of living, you need to know that there is hope for you.

But it's not found in you or in anything in this world. It's not found in relationships or business success or family or having a dream home with so many people, so many things that people run after, these things.

The only hope there is for escape of this kind of life is found in Jesus Christ. The one who is above all these things.

Who can offer so much more than the fleeting pleasures and comforts of this world. Do you remember, I don't know if we looked at Ephesians 1, but just, if you got your Bibles, just turn back

with me to Ephesians 1.

And just see what Jesus has done for people and what he offers them. Ephesians 1 verse 3. You get the blessings of heaven if you come to Christ.

[8 : 52] What else do you get? Well, he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure, to the praise of his grace.

Verse 7. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. So you get all these amazing things when you come to Christ that are far beyond the stuff that you can run after in this world.

But people choose the things of this world because they're thinking about God is darkened, and they're alienated from him. So they can't find their way to him. It's only Christ that can wake them up and say, Come, leave these things alone.

If you chase after them, you're going to hurt yourself, and you're going to hurt other people. Leave it. Come with me. I'll show you a better way. So Jesus is the way out of being caught up in a lifestyle that doesn't go anywhere, and ends in nothing but disaster and despair.

So he gets you out of that lifestyle. But Jesus is also the pattern for how we should be walking. So Paul starts a section, Don't walk like this, but I do want you to walk like this.

[10 : 10] So how would you start walking as Christians? We'll have a look at verse 20 and 21, back in chapter 4 now. Don't walk like this.

Walk like this. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 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, 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.

Christians are different because they've learned Christ. Now that's an interesting way of saying what Paul has said there.

You have not come to know Christ this way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that's in Jesus. To learn Christ or to be taught in Christ is to learn from him and to learn who he is.

It means to learn about Jesus and to learn who he is and to learn from him. To know him and to be shaped by his teaching. It's interesting.

[11 : 32] The Greek word for learn is used over 200 times in the New Testament. It's a very important word for describing our relationship with Christ.

Our church tradition often emphasizes that you must know Jesus and that we must love him. And that's obviously right. But how much have you learned about him? And how much have we learned from him in how to live our lives?

How well do you know what he wants you to do or not to do in any given situation? Can you recall Jesus' words and ideas and commands?

Or do you forget them in the heat of the moment? And then later on you go, oh, yes, that's what I should have done or shouldn't have done. How closely are our thoughts and words and actions in the heat of the moment?

Not when we're sitting at home or here we are at church where everything is fine. But when there's sparks of problems. When problems come up. When situations arise and you don't like something.

[12 : 43] How closely are our thoughts and words and actions patterned on those of Christ? We have to be doing what Jesus says we must do. It's not good enough to have a deep, personal, intimate relationship with him.

Come to church and sing and feel very close to God. And then go home and then explode because someone left the geyser on or didn't turn the geyser on.

Or left the milk out. Or the next door neighbor's dog is barking. Or etc. Remember what Jesus says at the end of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 7.

Starts in Matthew 5. He's gone on for a long time on the Sermon on the Mount. Tending people to do lots of different things. And he ends up by saying, Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice, in other words, actually does them, is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

But everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn't put them into practice, is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. So we must learn about Jesus, learn from him, and learn to be like him.

[13 : 54] But now learning does take time. It's not an instant wave of the magic wand and you know everything about Jesus. It's not something that happens overnight. But it is something like normal learning.

It's going to require focus from our side, dedication, and intentionality. We sometimes think that when the change happens kind of automatically in the Christian life, that's a dangerous place to be. Because we've got the Holy Spirit, there is a sense where he's so powerful, he does change things. But here Paul is saying, Yes, you've got the Holy Spirit, but I want you to do something with the knowledge that you've got.

Learn more about Jesus. Track more of him. Keep reading the Gospels and learning what he does and then do those things when the time requires. Learn to walk well.

Learn to walk like Jesus. Learn to live like Jesus. Learn to respond to the things of this world like Jesus responded. We were in Mark just a few months ago and he's hanging on the cross and the guys that have put him there are mocking him.

[15 : 04] And he says, Lord, just please forgive them. It's incredible. Then learn to do that ourselves in our own life for people to do far less to us.

Now, we've got to learn to walk well. So walking properly here is walking like Jesus. It's standing tall. It's not being proud, but it's being assured of yourself, knowing what's right and wrong, not being shaken and taken left and right, being wobbly and choosing what's right and wrong. It's being straight, knowing and just following that path. But Paul is going to mix his metaphors here when it comes to how to live our transformed lives. He starts off by talking about walking and I was going to talk about how to dress.

So to walk well, to live the Christian life well, we have to learn to dress well, to dress properly. We need to learn to dress, in a sense, smartly. So, this is what verse 22 to 24 is all about.

Put off your old self, which belongs to your former way of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds and put on your new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

[16 : 32] Now, Paul uses this put off and put on metaphor quite frequently in his writings. You've got it in Romans chapter 13 and Colossians 3. And it's such a helpful way to think about how we should change.

That's because each of us gets dressed every day. We've all got clothes on this morning, warm. We've put new, probably if you most likely have put on some new clothes this morning.

I'm just trying to think my socks. Sometimes, sometimes you've got to haul out those old socks. But the thing is, we don't get dressed by chance. It's not an automatic thing.

Now we don't think about it, I understand. But you've got to choose what you put on. We choose what to wear. And we do it every day. We take off our old clothes at the end of the day, and the next day we put on new clothes.

We don't go around wearing our old smelly clothes all the time. Certainly not if you're going to work. Teenagers might be slightly different. But once you start working, you quickly realize you can't just wear the old sweaty clothes from the day before.

[17 : 43] So what does this mean for our way of thinking, how we live? Part of our transformation is making deliberate, daily choices, but also in each interaction that we come across, to not act out of our old, selfish, foolish way of thinking, what Paul calls the old way, the old man, but to act out of our new man.

Something's not selfish. That's not, how can I get something out of this interaction? But how can I please Jesus? How can I please God? To do what God wants and to aim for his standards and his standards of conduct, not me primarily.

So let's take a closer look at the steps to see how it works. To put off? To put off is to place, to put something somewhere.

It's a putting word. You place something there and then you leave it there. It's intended to stay that place. It's like, it's used of putting a lamp somewhere to put it there.

You don't put it there to take it with you again. You put it there to leave it there. So if you take something off in your life, something, one of the, some sin, some bad habit, some wrong way of

thinking, some over anxious response or angry response or upset response, Paul says take it off and what he means by taking it off, he means leave it there.

[19 : 15] Leave it on the ground. Don't, just leave it. Take it off and leave it. Don't pick it up again. Make a point of making sure it stays off. Put off your old self.

Your old self. Well, old here means something that's been used and now overused and is no longer useful anymore.

It's something really old. It's so worn out, it's not a fit for purpose anymore. So the, our old self, the old me, the old us, before we became renewed in Christ, is, it can't do anything useful for the kingdom.

It can't do anything useful for God. It just gets in the way and makes a mess of things. And what's more, this old self has become corrupted by deceitful desires.

It's, the word for corrupt here is rotten or spoiled like fruit that's gone bad. It's like when you go to the gym and you take off your, your sweat laden clothes, you stuff them in your bag and then you forget them there for a week until you go to gym the next time.

[20 : 32] And you open that bag, whoo, you know, it's enough to make your eyes water. There's just no way you're going to put those clothes back on again.

So, when we're, when we're faced with decisions in our daily life about how we're going to react or act or take action, be proactive, this kind of thing of taking off our old self that's corrupt and can't be used, that should help us to putting off sin in our life.

We should see sinful thoughts, sinful actions and sinful words for what they are. Old, useless, not contributing anything helpful or constructive, rotten, smelly and actually quite dangerous and poisonous because if you, you know, if you put on moldy clothes you're going to inhale it and you just get so sick.

I mean, I don't know anyone who's done that but, so just, when you're thinking of, okay, I've got it, I know I need to change but it's really hard to get out of these sinful habits, just think of your sinful habits, the stuff that you do that doesn't help, that's bad as really, yucky, gross, smelly, stinky old clothes and that just puts that into perspective, okay, you know what, I actually don't want to have that in my life because it's just so gross.

I mean, if, okay, there's not really enough of us here today but, when there's lots of us here and someone walks in with sweaty old gym clothes, most people will be like, you know what, why don't you go sit at the back?

[22 : 05] I mean, I know we're polite and Christians but you don't want to be around that person because it's so, it's not nice. That's what sin does to us. It breaks down relationships with people. Alright, so, take off your old self, take off stuff that, the sin stuff, leave it on the ground, just leave it there and don't go back to it.

Well, what are you supposed to do next? Well, the next step is to put on your new self, the new you, the one that God has saved and is being changed to be more and more like him every day.

To put on, to put on the new self, to put on the word for put on is to be totally wrapped up in and actually under this garment. That, that section we read from Isaiah where there's, where you're clothed and robed in these magnificent clothes.

It's to sort of sink into that clothing. It's like having a thousand dollar shirt. It fits you like a glove. It's a second skin. So, this is total transformation from old rotten clothes to new living amazing clothes. You get a whole new you. You get a total makeover inside and out. You got to put these new clothes on, the new you, the new self.

[23 : 29] New here means fresh and young and able and vigorous. Old is broken and can't do anything, can't change. A new person has power and strength to do what he needs to do.

Something new that supersedes the old. It's something that's abounding in possibility and energy. New here is better. Think of when you get a brand new set of running shoes or brand new sport kit. You want to go out straight away and give it a test run. You're ready to go and take on opposition and push your limits. That's what God is doing for us. He gives us that energy to start doing the things that he wants us to do.

What else do we learn about this new self here? Well, it's created to be like God. We have been created, in fact, recreated to be like God, to be in his image, in his likeness.

To be a Christian is literally to be made more and more like God, to be his image bearer. It's that language from Eden, from Genesis chapter 1. It's to be the image bearer that we were always

meant to be, but with which sin sort of spoils and trips us up.

[24 : 45] To be new here, to be created in God's image, is to become our true authentic self, actually. Sin breaks that reflection down, but to be recreated in God's image is to have the kinks in our clothing, in our lifestyle, ironed out and have our holes in our lifestyle mended as we become more like Christ and more like God.

Put on your new self, created to be like God, so to be a Christian is to receive something God-like. That sounds, that sounds interesting.

That sounds like something cool as opposed to being alienated from God. Not, I don't know, I don't want that. God looking, you know, God is going to look at the sin in our life the same way that we look at that smelly, yucky, sweaty, I'm thinking of grave clothes, but not, where were we?

Not in the grave yet. Gym. Those gym clothes. God is like, oh man, I swore, that's horrible. But if someone is made in his image and looks like him and does what he wants, hey, that looks amazing. I like that. That looks amazing. I like that. That looks amazing. That looks amazing. That looks amazing. That looks amazing. Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

[26 : 19] True righteousness and holiness. That speaks about being upright and straight and whole and wholesome and healthy and true.

That's why I was talking about walking well. It's having a back that's upright. And being able to go through life knowing exactly what's good and bad, right and wrong and then doing the right thing. Not in any overly overbearing way and judgmental way but just knowing humbly under God that this is right and that's wrong.

I'm not going to bother with that anymore. I'm choosing this way to do things. I'm choosing a new way to do things. using the clothing metaphor to be created in God's image in true righteousness and holiness is to look a bit like James Bond.

Not just on the outside but on the inside. You know that classic James Bond I can't really do it but you know it's straight back that English thing and he's walking around so proud it's not proud but it's just you know he's got the right thing he's got the right attitude and you can't mess with him.

Well how do we how do we get from old to new? Well we've got to be renewed in the thinking or attitude or spirit of our minds. The NIV has translated it be renewed verse 23 in the spirit in the attitude of your minds.

[27 : 51] The key part of our process of change from putting our old putting off our old and putting on the new is having our thinking renewed. Remember we started the series off the back of Nick's earlier series on sacrifice and we ended and we're looking at Romans 12 be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Paul is saying the same thing here again. Our thinking needs to be renewed. That's not our only it's not just our outward actions and words that must change but our thoughts and attitudes and even our desires.

The problem when we sin is the desire feels so strong we feel we have to do it but with the power of Christ and having your mind changed knowing how yucky sin is you actually slowly but surely begin to get power over that and the desire to do the wrong thing lessens and the desire to do the right thing for God increases.

Although that comes with practice. We'll pick that up in just a minute. So that's what we've this is how Paul wants us to be changed and transformed.

It's going to happen by throwing away putting off bad habits bad thoughts bad actions bad words and picking up and putting on new thoughts new words new actions stuff that God likes stuff that God tells you to do.

[29 : 19] And then in the rest of that chapter Paul begins to thrash that out in some detail. So to put this into practice there's do's and don'ts laid out for us in verse 25 to 32.

Now it's not a comprehensive list but it does show us the pattern of putting off and putting on. There's a whole bunch of stuff that Paul says in the next few verses but in each case Paul says what we should no longer be doing what we should be doing and then he does something quite brilliant he gives us a motivation for putting away the bad and choosing the good.

So don't do this do this here's why you want to do the right thing. So have a look at verse 25.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood.

So stop lying but rather speak truthfully to our neighbor. Why? Because we're all members of one body. We're actually one body. Lying breaks our unity but truth makes us binds us stronger together.

He's speaking before about speaking the truth in love so we've looked at that. Verse 26 In your anger don't sin. Don't let the sun go down while you're still angry and don't give the devil a foothold. [30 : 30] Don't be angry don't be angry rather be quick to forgive. Why? Because you don't want the devil to wreak havoc with your relationships. When you're angry with someone you can't be their friend.

But at church we've got to be friends. We can't let anger fester. Verse 28 Don't steal. What must you do? Work hard. Why?

So that you can have something to share with others. Isn't that an interesting way for Paul to get us to do the right thing? Don't steal. Work hard. Not for you but so that you can become a provider for someone else.

In verse 29 Don't let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen.

Don't say negative hurtful things. If you can't say anything good at all rather not say it. But Paul doesn't say that. He doesn't want you to remain silent.

[31 : 35] He wants you not to not have only bad stuff he wants you to have good stuff. Don't say negative or hurtful things rather say things that will help build others up so that they can experience God's grace through you.

notice how each sin is focused on me and what I can get out of any given situation whereas doing the right thing is actually aimed at helping others and making sure that their life is better.

It's an interesting swap around there. Now the list of things we can change goes on. We don't have time to go through all of it today but as long as you're practicing taking off our bad thoughts our bad feelings our bad actions and how do you know if it's bad?

Well you can see by the consequences. People generally don't like it when we do bad things. You'll hear about it they'll give you feedback you'll see it you'll feel it and then put on godly ones.

As long as you're practicing that you'll be moving in the right direction. Remember change is a process and for all of us it'll be a lifelong walk.

[32 : 47] It's a lifelong journey. God wants us to walk well to base our life on learning from Jesus to get rid of all the things in our life that pull us towards selfishness and sin and to replace that with all good things that make us look and sound more like Jesus.

So that's how we're going to continue this transformation process is by throwing the bad things away and picking up all the good things that God tells us to in his word. Right, let's pray to God to ask him to help us do that better.

Heavenly Father your word is so full of truth and life and helpful things and when we look at our life and we realize where we come from Lord that it's in and of ourselves it's full of sinful yucky bad thoughts and behaviors and words but Lord through the power of the spirit and through the power of Christ that can miraculously amazingly change to have godly upbuilding holy good thoughts and words and actions.

Lord will you continue to work in our lives help us to remember who we are we can be someone who walks tall lives a life worthy of our calling and who dresses ourselves in the new man according to Christ.

Amen. Amen.