

## Personal Holiness

08/24/25

Wearing clothes can be very confusing for some of us. Someone can tell you to dress for an event by telling you to dress semi-formal or black tie, or business casual, casual wear, business, cocktail dress, smart casual, white tie, streetwear, preppy fashion, sporty, punk fashion, romantic, eclectic, gothic, and there are many others. Outside of these events, we usually dress in a way that defines who we are. I knew a worker who only wore sleeveless tees. I knew a park volunteer who always wears jeans, boots, western shirt, and a cowboy hat. I don't know what his real name is because everyone just calls him "cowboy". I knew a preacher that always wore a suit. Our current President either is wearing a suit or golf clothes. His clothes help to define who he is. We wear shirts and hats that have a sport logo of our favorite team on them. What would people think if you mixed these different ways to dress like business casual with streetwear or casual wear with punk fashion? People would either stare at you or have nothing to do with you. We usually try to keep in line with the dress style. Sometimes people think they can live out Holy living and worldly living together. Sometimes people think it's alright to just mix in a little worldly living into Holy living and it shouldn't hurt anything. Today, we'll look at how we are to clothes ourselves in the world we live in today. The last two sermons in this series will be on what goes against Holy living and that'll be next Sunday and then the following Sunday after that.

So, let's turn to Ephesians 4: 17 – 22 where we read this from Apostle Paul, <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. <sup>19</sup>They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. <sup>20</sup>But that is not the way you learned Christ!— <sup>21</sup>assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, <sup>22</sup>to put off your old self,<sup>[a]</sup> which

belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, (ESV - [www.Biblegateway.com](http://www.Biblegateway.com))

Paul, who was the leader of the Gentile Church at this time, wrote this letter to strengthen the faith of the Ephesians' Church. This was made up of mostly Gentile people – those who were non-Jewish. We would be considered a Gentile people as well. God had called Paul, who was Jewish and a Roman citizen to lead the Gentile Church and the Church in Ephesus was one of them. Now, this is important to know because in verse 17, Paul tells them to no longer walk as the Gentiles do. The Church was made up of mostly Gentile people, but Paul tells them to not walk like a Gentile. It sounds like Paul is telling us that these Gentiles and we are to have a complete change. Paul makes this very clear in verse 21 and 22 that when these Gentiles heard about Jesus and the truth was taught to them, they were to put off their old self. They were actually no longer considered Gentiles anymore. Now, we have to understand that they were no longer Gentile in the eyes of Jesus. Jesus makes it very plain in John 17: 13 – 19 as He says this prayer to His Father, “<sup>13</sup> But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them<sup>[b]</sup> in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sake I consecrate myself,<sup>[c]</sup> that they also may be sanctified<sup>[d]</sup> in truth. (ESV - [www.Biblegateway.com](http://www.Biblegateway.com)).”

Paul is only preaching Jesus in Ephesians. When we give our life to Jesus, Jesus sees us as living in the world, but not of the world. In other words, we become different. We no longer want to walk in the footsteps of the Gentiles like we used to. Paul is reminding the Church we are no longer walking as the Gentiles do. Jesus walked on this earth, but He wasn't of this world. Holy living is the opposite of Gentile living or worldly living.



So, Paul gives us examples of Gentile living in verses 17 – 19 of Ephesians 4 that we should want no part of. Paul tells us to no longer live as the Gentiles do, which includes in the futility of their thinking or minds. KJV uses the term “vanity”. The Greek usage of thinking means the mind and its ability to perceive and make moral judgments. The Greek meaning for futility or vanity means emptiness, vanity, and uselessness (Strong’s Concordance). In other words, Gentiles are able to think, but there is nothing driving that thinking to its original thinking. When Adam and Eve were created, their mind was in tune with God and their mind was made for that. When they made the choice to sin, their thinking was no longer in tune with God. Our minds were made for the purpose to have a relationship with Jesus. If we decided not to go in that direction, our mind becomes empty and useless for the works of God. Instead, the human mind will go toward sin as Paul tells us in verse 19. In fact, the human mind will become useless for God and dive into every kind of impurity. When this happens, then we have the hardening of the heart toward God. Hardening of the heart means to become stubborn toward God or become obstinate toward God. The heart becomes unwilling to do the Will of God. Holy living wants no part of that and Paul didn’t want the Church to get all caught up in their earthly culture. For us to keep from getting to this state, we ask Jesus that His prayer comes true for us. Jesus asked His Father in verse 17 of John 17, “<sup>17</sup> Sanctify them<sup>[a]</sup> in the truth; your word is truth.” If we continue to study the Word of God, His Spirit will keep our minds focused onto Jesus so that our minds won’t become empty and useless. There has to come a point in our life where we come to the conclusion mentally that we need to stop straddling the fence and come to the decision to either walk like a Gentile or walk like Jesus. We can’t have both ways.

Let’s continue on. Paul adds this in Ephesians 4: 22-32, “<sup>22</sup> to put off your old self,<sup>[a]</sup> which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,<sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,<sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. <sup>26</sup> Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,<sup>27</sup> and give no opportunity to

the devil. <sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. <sup>29</sup> Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (ESV – [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com))”

Paul now tells us that if we are a new person through Jesus, this will include our mind. We now have His Spirit helping to direct our thinking. Plus, we are to put on the new self that now lives in God’s righteousness and holiness. We no longer want to do the things we used to do. We no longer want to give the devil a foothold in our life – that is saved for Jesus. We no longer want to steal, but to work so that we can help others. We no longer want to be angry all the time because it may lead to sin. We no longer want to say unwholesome talk because it will hurt those around us and we are to help build people up instead. So, we no longer follow that old Gentile self. We no longer walk the walk of the Gentile. If we do, then we will grieve the Holy Spirit. The Greek term for “grieve” means to cause sorrow and distress. Just like we grieve when a love one dies because death has caused us to grieve. When we walk like a Gentile as a follower of Christ, we bring sorrow and distress to the Holy Spirit. Think about that for a moment. Many a parent has grieved over a child that has gone in the wrong direction of life. The Spirit of God does the same with every Christian that wavers under the pressure of the world and starts to obey the culture’s will instead of God’s will. God’s will for us is perfect and good for us now and for the long run. John Wesley made this statement many years ago, “The first priority of my life is to be holy, and the second goal of my life is to be a scholar”. John Wesley knew what was important in his life and his first priority was to be holy. Is that our first priority in life?

Paul then states in verse 32 that we are to be compassionate to each other and forgiving each other. This is the fruit that is produced when we stop walking like a Gentile or putting on the clothes of a Gentile and starting living a Holy life for Jesus. Showing natural compassion through the Spirit will be our theme during



our life on this earth. Paul states this again in another of his letters in Colossians 3: 12-14, “<sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (ESV – [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com))

Paul tells us to put on love in verse 14. This is the love of Jesus and those around us. If we can it simpler, it would be Holy living is love period. Jesus preached what Paul is talking about in Matthew when Jesus preached His great sermon. We are to take off the old Gentile clothes and stop walking in that direction. Instead, we want to be a holy people that are compassionate, patient, forgiving, meek, humble, and kind. His Spirit can produce this within us if only we would allow Him to. Does this sound like a better set of clothes to put on than the Gentile clothes? Does it sound better to walk with Jesus than to walk like a Gentile? We need to spend more time to ask Jesus to help us to want to be a Holy people that are pleasing to Him. We do Holy living to please Jesus not ourselves. Holy living is a form of worship to our Holy and all-powerful God. It is pleasing to Him. Let's not grieve the Spirit by being hard hearted and disobedient. Let's ask Him to help us to want to be Holy.

I close this sermon with this quote from Rev. Charles Spurgeon's sermon on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1872 while he was preaching on Holiness: “It is not by personal holiness that a man shall enter heaven, but yet without holiness shall no man see the Lord.”

*Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia VIII.* Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, 1984

*The Strongest Strong's Concordance.* Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001