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Livin' in the Old Man's Rubble
Ephesians 4:17-21

Flipping through the channels several months ago I caught a portion of an extreme makeover show. This is the one where a woman is very sad about several aspects of the way she looks and a team of "makeover experts" and surgeons work hard to transform her into a model beauty. The results are quite dramatic. The cosmetic changes, weight loss, make-up, surgeries, fashion clothes, made her look like a totally different person. I am sure this gal probably felt better about herself...for a while. Through the marvels of medicine and makeup you can change the way someone appears on the outside, but clothes, surgery and makeup, do not make the woman. You may be able to change the way you look on the outside. The problem is that it covers up the real you. Extreme makeover shows may be able to polish up the image, but it can do nothing to polish up the soul.

Now what if God were host on an extreme makeover show. What would He start with changing ...in you? He would not begin by changing the way we look on the outside. God would begin by changing the inside and that is changing our minds, the way we think, our attitudes, our priorities, our values and core drivers that motivate us. He would begin with a penetrating analysis of what is on our inside and deal with that because until you renew the inside, just putting a new coat of paint on the barn, only lasts for a season. Extreme makeovers that make a difference must go farther down then just skin deep.

Amy Grant wrote a song "Are you livin in the Old man's rubble? Are you listening to the father of lies? If you are then you're headed for trouble. If you listen to long you'll eventually die. That song urges us to no longer live as we once did when we were unbelievers. We are

challenged not to allow the behaviors and conduct and lifestyles and values and attitudes of our past to keep controlling us. We need to change our thinking so that our conduct is changed and we begin to live consistently with who we are in Christ.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. Paul has challenged the believing Christians in Ephesus to live in keeping with who they are. He has reminded them of their incredible position that is theirs in Christ in chapters 1-3 then in chapter four v. 1 states "Therefore...walk in a manner worthy of the calling that you have been called." Paul lays out a strong argument for the believers in the church to be diligent to preserve the unity. He reminds them of how important unity is to God and since it is extremely important to God that you get along with that other woman in this church that may irritate you, then it ought to be vitally important to you. Isn't that the way love works? Love comes with responsibility doesn't it?

If something is important to my wife then it becomes very important to me. If one of my kids come into our home with dirty hands they are very careful not to place them anywhere near our antique settee in the entryway. They are careful not because they give a rip whether that chair is clean or not, but because they love mom very much and know that mom cares very much whether that chair is kept clean. They also know that Dad cares a great deal about what mom cares about. The point is that when we care about the things that God cares about, it demonstrates that we love God. God has made it repeatedly clear that it is vitally important that believers dwell together in unity and so, whether we give a rip about unity or not, unity ought to matter a great deal to us because it matters to God. (John 17)

After explaining a few verses on how God has given gifts to help equip the church to live together and operate in unity, Paul shifts from unity among the believers to purity among the believers. Different people ought to behave differently. We have an entirely different viewpoint then

the rest of the world. We have a different master. We have a different set of goals. Different people ought to behave differently. And so we come to verse 17 where we pick up this mornings study. (READ 4:17-21)

There is a parallel from 4:1 where Paul said walk in a manner worthy of the calling that you have been called.” And now here in verse 17 “Walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk in the futility of their mind.” In 4:1 we are called to walk or live in keeping with whose we are in Christ. Here in 4:17 we get the negative side to avoid and are exhorted to live in accordance with who we are not.

When it says in v.17 we are not to walk or live as the Gentiles do it simply is referring to Gentiles as the nations, or worldlings, those who are unsaved and outside of Christ. Paul is saying to the Ephesians, “You are believers in Christ now, you ought to think differently then the world does. He is not starting with actions. He doesn’t start the makeover on the outside. He starts with the mind and tells them that the way the worldlings think is futile. Empty. Devoid of purpose. Do not adopt the worlds way of thinking. Do not value the things the world values because it is purposeless and empty.

Paul begins with a very penetrating analysis of the hardness and darkness and futile ways of thinking because its important to start at the root, the core. If the root of our problem is not recognized then it is impossible to apply righteous behavior to our actions. Paul continues in chapter four to tell people how to manage their anger and time and money and tongue and relationships, but all of that teaching will fall on deaf ears unless our thinking, our belief is first changed.

If we continue to think like the rest of the world thinks then we are going to behave like the rest of the world behaves...and if we live like the world lives then we may still be a Christian, but we will have absolutely no impact or be able to help them. A boy put three sparrows into a canary cage hoping to teach the sparrow how to sing and within a week the canary was chirping along exactly like the sparrows. If we give

ourselves to the attitudes and actions and ways of thinking like the world, then we will inevitably do the same things as they. There is no way around it. And it starts not with actions...it starts with the mind, the thought life. The mind is important, because what we think determines the choices we make and in turn shapes the direction of our life. Christianity must be far more than a higher level of morality. It must be a radical change that totally removes the old government inside of us for a new king and that will in turn result in a radical change of behavior. Christians we are no longer who we used to be so stop living like it. Stop living in the old mans rubble. Stop listening to the father of lies.

So...what does the life of the unsaved look like? V.17 they walk, or live, in the futility of their mind. They may be working hard, but they are getting nowhere. They may well truly believe that their direction is going to lead them to somewhere satisfying, but eventually they will discover that its futile, empty and all their work produces nothing of lasting effect. Regardless of their effort and good intentions...its ultimately pointless and spinning wheels in mud.

V.18 Their minds are darkened in their understanding. They are blind to the reality of the results of their choices. Their ability to grasp reality, especially spiritual reality is gone. They fail to see how their choices and actions are leading them down a path of pointlessness. They are blinded, unable to see the dead alley that is at the end of the road. Romans 1:22 says "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. Professing to be wise, they became fools." II Corinthians 4:4-6 "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.... For God who said Light shall shine out of darkness is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Year ago when Erin and I were working with a youth group in California, we had a barbecue at a very nice house in the Woodside Hills. It was even equipped with a full batting cage and pitching machine. We cranked it up to the 80mph and the balls were really whipping in there. As the evening grew darker, it became more and more difficult to even see the ball coming at you, let alone hit it. On the last few balls before I finally gave up, I felt like I was just out there swinging in the dark. That is what it feels like for the unbeliever. Their comprehension and understanding of spiritual truth and reality is darkened. Satan's does not make it easy for them to see the truth. That makes their thinking and life futile. They are just swinging in the dark.

V.18 They are excluded from the life of God. They are shut out from the privilege of a life with God. No access in prayer. No resurrection power available. No joy. No peace that surpasses all comprehension, no ultimate love or hope. Why? Because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their heart. It could be they are ignorant, they simply do not know, are uneducated, uninformed about the truth of the good news. If its an information problem then maybe we need to tell them the good news. But v.18 tells me there is more then an information problem that is causing their ignorance. It's a rebellion problem. Their minds are ignorant because their hearts are hard. They don't want to know. That word hardness is the same word used to describe something harder then marble, like petrified wood. Its very hard to cut through or drill through. You can't penetrate it. The hard heart is very difficult to influence. It's stubborn and unteachable. Here we see a willful hardening and rebellion against God.

And so they become callous. I used to play a lot of tennis in college and would get large calluses built up on my hands and feet. I would sometimes have to shave them down with a razor blade...it was not a pretty sight. The calluses would get so thick I could take a straight pin and stick it right in without even feeling it. I was totally callous and

unfeeling to the sharp point. The callous was my bodies defense mechanism to protect the sores underneath. So too the unsaved get calloused trying to protect and cover the pain and shame underneath their skin. They build up layers of callous that renders them insensitive to the pointed pricks of God. They become insensitive to the love and acceptance and forgiveness and grace that God offers. Each of their calloused layers says, "I can do it myself. I don't need God. I will not get hurt again. I am the captain of my destiny and master of my fate."

So they become desensitized to sin. It no longer disturbs their conscience and v.19 explains they then give themselves over to sensuality. Some have become so calloused that they must cut themselves in order to feel alive. Cutting is a huge problem among our teens. Some become addicted to every sort of way to gratify the body's desires and appetites. Sex, food, sleep, material buying stuff. They indulged in more and more and deeper need to gratify the senses and it takes more because they become more and more callous and desensitized. They practice then every kind of impurity and do it with greediness. They exercise and think up more and more ways to gratify their pleasure senses with all sorts of foul, dirty, unclean lewd and obscene way they can think of. They do all this with a selfish greediness, that insatiable desire to gorge self with that which we have no right to possess. They refuse to recognize any limits and after a while don't even care who sees them doing it.

That is the shocking and penetrating analysis of the unsaved. Not all are as bad as they could be but all will have the same ultimate purposeless and futile result. Impurity is impurity whether the glass of water is just slightly tainted or crude oil black...Its still impure. We think our world have been getting better and better with all our knowledge and information and new machines and toys and wealth. But we have simply an improved means to unimproved ends. Our technology and wealth simply takes us to the end of our futility quicker. And all are driven by

rebellion and ignorance against God. Its not against a church or a parent...its against God.

But you...v.20. But you who are believers. Did not learn Christ in this way. This isn't who you are....so don't live this way. Don't think this way. I like that it says "learned Christ" not learn about Christ but actually learn Christ. Christianity is a personal relationship following a person. You are learning a person. And we learn from the truth and we have heard of Him v.21 and have been taught in Him. As opposed to ignorance and hardness we then need to be hearing and responding in teachableness to the truth of God's word. John 17:17 says, "Sanctify them with truth for Thy word is truth. As the mind understands the truth of God's word, it is gradually transformed by the spirit in a changed life.

Paul has reminded the Ephesian believers what the life of the unsaved looked like so that we need to be doing the opposite and not fall back into wearing the all too comfortable clothes of the unsaved. We need to be renewed in our minds and put off the old and put on the new in Christ. We are no longer who we used to be...so we must stop living like it. It begins with renewal of the mind.

So 1. As opposed to being ignorant, we must be spiritually informed. Spiritually educate yourself. If you are struggling to follow God, make sure its not an information problem you are dealing with. Make sure you know well the truth of God in order to be able to follow it. Apart from the spiritual light, I can know 10,000 things but still not know the meaning of anything. Truth is light and ignorance is darkness. Man is ignorant because part of his being is not functioning. His spiritual part is shut down. We must wake up our spiritual part by feeding our minds with God's truth. Where are you feeding your minds with God's truth? Did you get several regular healthy meals this week. Are you learning to feed yourself? Are you getting you own spoon into God's word?

Second. The unsaved hearts are hardened. Unable to be penetrated with God's truth. That means I had better be the opposite. I had better put on a teachable spirit, with a moldable attitude toward God's truth. Not only do I want to know, I must want to be changed. Apart from God my heart is like a stone to all that is spiritual. When it does not move me. When it does not affect me or delight me...I am acting like a hard hearted pagan. The good news is that God reaches down and softens and penetrates even hard hearted people melting their hearts. God's amazing love has the ability⁷ to penetrate the hardness of men's hearts. We are not to stand here and fire blame...because we all were once there ourselves. That is the way it was with all of us until the light of God's truth penetrated our darkened understanding.

The unsaved mind then becomes callous. So #3 we believers then must resensitize our minds to sin. When our hearts are made insensitive to God it sets off a chain reaction that turns out the light of God and leads to meaningless life. Insensitivity to God leads to sensuality to the world. Notice the truth about it. Call it out. When you see sin on the television fed by a laugh track that dulls the sensitivity of our minds. Call it out for the sin it is. Turn it off. Walk away. Listen to yourself. Hear the sin in the gossip you speak. Hear the sin in the course words and crude jokes. Hear the lies. Point out the lust and greed and impurity. We cannot keep feeding the sin and ignoring it for we will become more and more desensitized to it and after awhile we simply will not see it any longer. It's like the frog who has been placed in the kettle in lukewarm water. It loves the water and will swim around quite contentedly, even though it could jump out at any time. Slowly the heat is increased on the stove and the water gets slowly...ever so slowly warmer and warmer. So slow is the change, the frog doesn't realize he is being boiled alive until it is too late. Believers we must resensitize ourselves to sin for we did not learn Christ in this way. James 4:4 "Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a

friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God". Note it does not say friendship with the worlding, but with the world, its' way of thinking, philosophies and values that put it in enmity with God. We need to watch what we are feeding our mind. Physically we are what we eat. Spiritually we are what we think. Proverbs 23:7 "as he thinks in His heart so is he."

So #4 if the pagan has given themselves over to impurity and practices self gratification and greed. We then as believers, need to practice purity and self-control. We can no longer allow the non-Christian to define life instead of the God who created us. Instead of presenting ourselves, our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness. We need to present ourselves to God as tools of righteous living. Romans 6:12-13 "Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. " Romans 13:13-14 "Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lust."

Put on the lord Jesus Christ. Learn Christ. More than learning about Him they we learn his values, His lordship, His purposes, His desires and loves and characters and delight. Jesus is where our extreme makeover must begin. Putting on Christ. Jesus embodies truth and when you find Jesus you will find truth. John 8:12 If any man follow me, he shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. John 8:31 "If you continue in my word, you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. That is what truth does....it sets men free. Renewal must go deeper than change our outside habits and look. When God does an extreme makeover, it must be an inside job. Where will you begin to partner with him today?