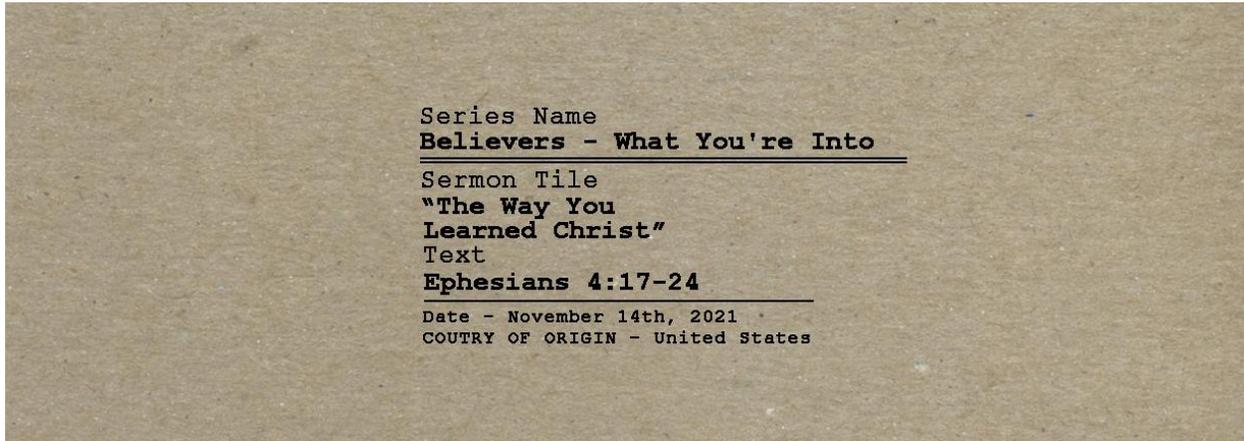


# "The Way You Learned Christ"



## [Eph. 4:17-24](#)

*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, <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.*

Video of Sermon: <https://youtu.be/ljrRPw6hNX8>

Sermon PowerPoint is available [HERE](#).

Sermon Transcript:

Pastor Thom Rittichier

Father in heaven, we thank you for grace, for an opportunity to pray and see your answers in our life. It is a joy. Those prayers are often born of challenges like pulling a trailer for the first time in a hilly area, in seeking your face and the joy that comes knowing that we're heard and you bring provision, the joy of having answers to prayer of interacting with people, having glimmers of hope, knowing the challenges, working all things together for good from God's hand in our lives. We thank you for that. And Father, we pray that as we come together today, to open your words of life, to have the experience of God in our life, God talking to us, the only way that we are fully assured and fully convinced by what Jesus said, through His Word. "The Word of the Lord came to me", we're told over and over in Scripture. And Jesus said, we hear

frequently, "I say to you by the Word of the Lord". Father, help us to experience you today. In that way, through your spirit. In Jesus name, I pray, amen.

You know, we all have our own way of doing things. Have you ever noticed that? We all have our own way, we talk about it as being my style. I got my style. This is a style, don't copy my style. But I see that style quite frequently. As a matter of fact. So we all have our own ways of style, the way we dress, the way we do our hair. Sometimes, for me, getting up and doing my hair is this, putting on a cap. And then you're good to go. Right. So our style. We also have our own kind of approach to things. Matter of fact, Frank Sinatra made it really big with that. He sang "My Way". That's what President Trump had played at his inauguration. I did it my way. It says something. It's my way. You've probably heard "It's my way or the highway". This week I was told, in one situation, that there's a new saying, "It's my way or there's something to pay". And you may have heard that one too. So we also have this thing about our modus operandi that we think about it and talk about it like that sometimes. One time a director was coming down from Muncie to talk to us about the physician's office there. And they refer to a doctors M O, his modus operandi. It's the way that we kind of go about doing things, that's the way we speak of it and talk about it and think about it. It's how we talk about our own way, our way of doing things. We also our own routines in the morning. Do you have a routine in the morning? Your way of doing things. My daughter has one. She has a routine of waking up that is very different from mine. She has this alarm clock, which has a light that is not so bright at first but brightens up very slowly and progressively brings up the light. And then it starts to talk to her about getting up. Sometimes she forgets to shut it off and it goes on all day long. That's not my way. And that's not my routine. It's her routine.

You know, God is very much aware that we have our ways, our ways of doing things. As a matter of fact, in Jeremiah 17:10 the Lord says this "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways,". The way that we go comes out of the heart, the mind, and the Lord looks there to give to everyone according to his ways, according to the fruit, what comes out of the actions of what they do in their way. So, the Lord is very much aware that we have our ways of doing things and in the passage we look at this morning, Paul tells us that God has a way that rightfully is to become our way in knowing Christ. As a matter of fact, he says it like this, "the way you learned Christ". That's what he refers to, a way that God has which is to become our way when we know Christ. And that's spoken about to us in Ephesians chapter four. So I'm going to ask you to turn there with me to Ephesians chapter four. We are continuing our series from Ephesians, which is titled "Believers/What you're into". And the whole book of Ephesians is well summarized in that statement, believers, this is what you're into. We have stated there some quite breathtaking things, like we are seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that we are presenting to the principalities and powers the extreme wisdom of God, there in the heavenly realms. This is what we're into, our life doesn't consist of only what transpires here on earth but what God uses us for in the heavenly places with the angelic principalities and powers, both of those for Christ and those who opposed God in the rebellion. And this is an eternal thing that goes on. And yes, it has to do with how we're handling the trials, the challenges, the difficulties right now, it's being made a spectacle, it's being made a show throughout the ages to come, so the Bible tells us. That's breathtaking and

it is far reaching. When we looked at that in detail in Ephesians somebody said to me afterwards, That is bizarre, but it's true. That was the follow up statement. It's true.

So, in Ephesians, we come to this, what your into. This is what we're into, the way that we learned in Christ, God's way for us, to be aware of. So I'm going to ask you, if you're with me in Ephesians 4:17-24, let's take a look at this, this way. "Now this I say and testify", Paul states and affirms as a testimony, "in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do," in their way, "in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to the hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!-assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." This statement is what we're into, in Christ Jesus. And the Apostle Paul says to us, clearly, this is what's happened in your life, but there is a daily part of this, a daily part of bringing that into your life. Therefore, he says, Don't go any further, don't any longer, don't go anymore in the way the Gentiles walk, because that still is the challenge. It still is the potential.

So this morning, we're going to talk about the way you learned Christ. This way that's no longer for us, he says, verses 17-19, and he describes this way. Then he talks about this way that's taught in Christ as ours now, this is ours. This is what God has brought to us in Christ, this way. I want you to know that the truth that is presented here is the most helpful, one of the very most helpful and most frequently referenced parts of Scripture. Because this, every time we take in the scriptures and bring them to heart, we are experiencing God and what He has to say to us. But this passage is particularly helpful. It's true for me, it's one that I go to often, to call on, to direct myself, to correct myself. And it's one that the Apostle Paul himself brings up repeatedly. He says it here, he says it in Romans 6, he says it in Colossians 3, he brings it up over and over and over. And as was the case for him, so is the case for me, and for the case of many other folks, a very important part of God's direction for us.

First, he says, there is this way that's no longer for us. And he says this in a unique fashion. He says, I affirm, I testify this in the Lord, this is based on the Lord's authority. This is His, I'm giving you this as a testimony in the Lord. It's in His authority. You know, we did have a way, before coming to Christ, we had a way. It was a way that is characteristic of the way of every person who's outside of Christ. Just to review what that way was, turned back with me a couple of chapters to Ephesians chapter two. "You were dead", he says in Ephesians 2:1-3, "in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked." This is the way, "according to the course of this world". The entire world is on this course. It is the course that follows the "prince of the power of the air". This was the way that Adam and Eve followed. It was the way that they handed over to the prince of power the air, to Satan, the course of this world. It's that way, he describes it fuller, "the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience". That's a description here of the Principality of the air, "among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, our

desires, carrying out the desires of our bodies, and of the minds, and were by nature, children of wrath, even as the rest of mankind." That is the way, the way of living according to what I want or what you want. What do I want, right now, what do I want? What do I want now? The desires for bodily things, desires that arise in our mind. As a matter of fact, the key feature of this way that is no longer ours is this, it is walking in the futility of the Gentile, the unsaved mind. It is living according to this, unregenerate, he calls it Gentile, as opposed to Christian, as opposed to Jewish. It's the unsaved mind.

That's what Adam and Eve did. Eve initially looked at this with her own desires and the trickery of Satan on her mind, so as to think she could come to a right conclusion and leave out God's direction. As a matter of fact, to choose contrary to God's direction based on her own perception of this, the way I see this, it's good for food, it's desirable to make one wise, this is good stuff. And she followed her thinking, putting off the directions that God had. And by the way, there was only one direction that God had given them, just one, just one. Don't eat of this tree of the knowledge good and evil. And thinking, I can go contrary to that, by trickery, she was deceived by the prince of the power of the air. And she went along. Adam, on the other hand, he wasn't deceived. The Bible says to us, Adam knew full well what he was doing and what God had said. He was fully aware of this. But Adam, in the futility of his own mind, thought that he could do differently, that it would be good for him to do differently than what God said. It's better for me to do that. So he took and he ate with her. And by that, sin entered the world, and death through sin, and it's what we currently experience, the process of dying and seeing people dying and the threat of COVID with death and the illness, it's what we see. It came from this, the futility of their own mind, in distinction and contradiction to what God had said to do. This futility word means emptiness, it means aimlessness. It doesn't mean empty in the sense that the minds of unsaved people are empty, quite the contrary. Their minds are quite full. Some are very disciplined minds and they're quite full of a difficult subject. What it means is that, what they're going after is empty, it's aimless, it gets nothing. Adam and Eve made their choice. It's good for food, desirable to make one wise and be like God, only to become empty, harmfully empty.

This passage of Scripture says it really, really well. Psalm 146:4 is talking about a person who is lost, "When his breath departs, he returns to the earth. And on that very day his thoughts perish." That's the emptiness of them. They go away, they achieve nothing. As a matter of fact, it all goes away, everything that they've thought of and gone after and lived for and hoped for. It goes away, it perishes. That's what he means by empty, it comes to nothing. It gains nothing. Paul, talking about this in Philippians 3:19 says, "Their end is destruction, their god is their belly", meaning their own desires and their own appetites. That's what rules them and "they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things." They can't think about anything, but what is on earth. And these people are the ones when talking to us and say,...I live in the real world. I don't live in this world of God and angels, I live in the real world. And that real world is that they're unable to lift their minds above what's earthly. They may have very disciplined and trained minds, full of accurate things about how the solar system works and how the pituitary gland functions and all kinds of things, but it's earthly. And it results in perishing. That is the key

feature of this way. The key feature is that it's a futile mind. Its a mind that really doesn't achieve the aim that it was created for.

Now, Paul goes on in verse 18 and talks about what this thinking is like. And he begins to list four things. First of all, their darkened in their understand. Because of the way it's functioning here on the earth, a cloud of darkness has come in to cover over what their understanding should be. Second, it is alienated from the life of God. God is foreign, God and His life is foreign to them. As a matter of fact, it's so foreign, that they go for days and months on occasion, and never even raise any thought of God, perhaps years, depending on how far they go into what the Bible calls depravity or a mind that has God absent from it. I'm sure you have, I know I have, encountered people like that. I remember one guy who said, I haven't thought about Him in years. That is the futility of the mind that he's talking about here. Third, it's futility, it's futile because of what's in them. He says because of the ignorance that is in them. It's not something they acquired. It is inherently in them now, an ignorance, they just don't know. They don't know the person of God, they don't know the redemption. They don't know the nature of sin. They don't know the process for dealing with sin. One of the things that we often do in talking with folks, at least I often do, is talk about the difference between a believers home and an unbelievers home. You know what the differences is? Although sin is in both, what's the difference between a home where believers live, and home where unbelievers live? Believers acknowledge their sin. They acknowledge that there is sin, that there is something off target with God, it's twisted. They acknowledge their sin, they know what to do with their sin. It's confess it and forsake it, confess it to God and the appropriate people, say the same thing God does. It's what believers do. And then to progress out of their sin. They deal with their sin, sin is there. It's the difference. But in unbelievers, this is a ignorance that is in them. It's in them. It's not something they choose. It's what is there. And fourth, he describes it as due to their hardness of heart. This word hardness is very interesting. I don't know, you may be able to look at your hands and see that there's these spots on your hands where the skin is thicker and tougher and harder. And as a matter of fact, when I was a kid, I used to walk all summer long without shoes. And I loved that. I got to the point where the calluses were so strong on my feet, that I could walk across the stones, and not hardly feel it, every once in a while I'd get a twing, but I wouldn't hardly feel it. This is what happens to their heart. They become hardened there, in their heart, a callus forms there, to the point that it can become petrified. Do you know that there are trees that get petrified, there's even people whose bodies have been petrified. I remember when I was a kid going to the carnival, and they had this guy who was called Petrified Pete. And they took it around as a petrified human being. That's what he's talking about here, this hardness of heart in responding to this life of God. They get to a point that they even deny any kind of existence or awareness of God.

That's the way that's no longer for us. Living in the futility, the emptiness, the non accomplishing of the mind because it's not on track with God. We're no longer there. Once you're born again, in Christ, the Bible says that you have the mind of Christ, you're born of the Spirit of God, and we get the mind of Christ. Philippians 2:5 says, "Have this mind of Christ among yourselves," you have it. So much so that you don't look out only for your own interests, your own desires, which is where this goes, but also the interest of others. So having said that, I

want to add this. Here's what their actions become, their actions because of their futility of mind. They now have actions that have become calloused, they're apathetic, untouchable for God. They have surrendered to wantonness, to what I want next and what I want next and what I want next, and it drives, it drives their life. And it drives it with the fact that it never gets satisfied, for there is this constant greediness for more. And it goes into the area that is impurity, which doesn't mean it's just sexual, that surely can be that case, but it's just all tied up in me and only all about me. That's where we no longer live, in the futility of the mind.

With the mind of Christ, Paul says, this is what we're taught, as we've been taught in Jesus, verses 20 and 21. And he lists for us three things that are the "to dos", the to be, the what functions here in our life. Now, it's interesting, the way he says this, because he says it not as a command. But is something that as a believer, this has been established but it needs to be renewed daily, it needs to be pursued daily. This is true, it is what we have in believing in Christ, this mind of Christ, these three things, but it needs to be renewed daily. Paul says this and he confirms, this is the truth that's in Jesus. This is "not the way you learned Christ!-assuming you have heard about him and were taught in him". And Paul is saying that that is the condition, assuming that this is the condition, you've heard of Jesus, who he is and what he's done, and you've been taught in him, because you've embraced him. This is the truth that's in Jesus, this is the truth that we come to. This is what is conforming to what is real. This is living in the real world, if you would. The world that God created and put in motion, and that there is a whole group of folks who are alienated from the life of God. As a matter of fact, if we take what Jesus said is true, that's the broad way that many go that way. And the narrow way, if we take what Jesus said is true, that few go this way, is the way that embraces truth, reality as it is, in Jesus. This is the way that we're taught. The way that's the reality for this world in Jesus.

And then he begins to unfold this, and he unfolds it by giving us these three things. Two of them are things that we've done, but it's got to be renewed. And it hinges around this renewing of it for our daily experience. This is the first one, verse 22. This is to put off, to put off your old man, meaning your old self, which he defines here as being your former manner of life, the way that you lived, the way that you used to go at life. If you're a believer, no matter when you came to Christ, you have a former manner of life. If you're older, you got more and more and more into your own way, your manner of life. If you're younger, you still had your own way, wasn't quite so developed. But everyone who's in Christ has a former manner of life, a manner of life that comes by being bent away from God, leaving him out, if you would, that's the old man. And we put that off when we accepted Christ. We put that off when we trusted in his death as the payment for our sin, his burial, his resurrection, which is the demonstration that this life of God thing is real, when he rose from the dead and ascended and established his church, we put off this old man. But he tells us here in such a way that we have to be putting it off. Because it takes a daily renewal on this. Look with me at verse 22, "To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt", or actually the term is, it becomes corrupt, "through deceitful desires". This word corrupt means that it decays, and it gets worse, it rots, this manner of life can become more corrupt, through deceitful desires. These things that we think that we want that disregard God like Adam out right contradicted Him, or to be tricked to think that this is desirable contrary to what God said is desirable, it becomes worse.

And to think that way, that futility of mind, it gets worse, the manner of life gets worse. You know, I've even seen it happen to believers, I'm sure you have too. As a matter of fact, I have to be on guard about it not happening in my life. Because it does. I've seen it go that way sometimes. Just to give a illustration, I've seen when folks get involved in the church and they realize that if they're cranky, they can get their own way. Then they learn to get cranky so that they can start to run the church in their own way. And it gets worse and it grows and corruption starts. It can happen. So therefore, he says, to put this off, it's what we've done already in Christ, it's what we've done. It's just got to be renewed.

And that's what he says right here in verse 23, "to be renewed", that is to be made fresh again and again and again, "in the spirit of your mind". And notice this thing is focused on the mind. The unbeliever has the futility of mind. Ours, as believers, is the renewing of the mind, to be made fresh again with God, and made fresh again with God, and made fresh again with God. That is different. It makes you and I different. This could change, this can go God's way, to be renewed in the spirit of your mind. That's the thing that is daily. This is a present thing. This is a thing that we're to gauge in, over and over and over. And how do we do that? How do we renew our mind? How do we do that? By hearing God's word and responding to it volitionally, with my choice, to be exposed to this, and then to make a choice. By saying, That's what I'm seeing here in my life, that doesn't line up, it isn't something better and desirable, it's going contradictory to God, it'll plunge us into destruction.

Look with me at verse 24. And so I choose to put on the new, to put on the new refreshed man. It's the same word here, the renewed, the refreshed man, the new self, the way that goes with the Lord. It finds his way and goes with him, to put on the new self, this new self, which we experienced when we're saved, we're created after the likeness of God. And we've got to put this on, we've got to put this on again and again as our mind is renewed, to be like God in what is right. What is right, as we deal with other folks. What is right and holy, which means in our relationship with Him, that we are committed to going that way. The righteousness and holiness of truth. The truth as it's in Jesus. You know, Adam and Eve had one direction from God, they had one, don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And by their mind being tricked, and their mind going to the empty, like Adam did, we are plunged into this world, the real world, like it is, where there is sin, there is injury, there is pandemic, there is challenge. But then there is joy. The joy of adopting God's way and choosing to do this and recognizing the challenge that comes with this. And then going on.

Recently, with the grandkids, I was finishing up the Gospel of John, because we were doing the Gospel of John with science together. It's great. You know, at the end of the Gospel of John, it says, very interesting thing. It says that Peter was told by Jesus that when he is older, people are going to cuff him and take him to a place to do what he doesn't want to do. When he was younger, he was free and could do what he wanted. But now that he gets older, Jesus is telling him this. And it's going to be hard, and you're going to die. And he says, You're going to die in a way that glorifies God! Wait a minute, that's not the way life works. We glorify God by being victorious in what we do, coming away winners, being the one that is the star, that is accomplished. No Peter, you're going to be strapped and you're going to go where you don't

want to go and they're going to kill you and God is going to be glorified in it! Because it's not the emptiness of our minds. It's the life of God, being known and not alien. Refreshed, to put off this and put on this. It's the way we've learned Christ.

So which way do we go? Which way do we go? You know, I had that decision this week. I had to have a root canal. Doesn't that sound like fun? I didn't mention that in the challenges. And I didn't mention that in the joys, did I. And as I was going there, I was driving on Nebo Road. If you're familiar with Nebo Road, even if you're not, they've got this roundabout there. And I needed to keep going on Nebo Road to get up to Kilgore and take a right. So I was going, I came to the roundabout, and there was a guy there with a truck that had put down traffic cones. And I couldn't go the way I needed to. So I stopped and I looked at him, blocking off the continuation of Nebo Road, thinking to myself, This is a way I need to go. But now I can't go this way. So which way do I go? So I stopped there. And pretty soon he signaled to me to go on through the roundabout. So I thought, Okay, I'm going to go around the roundabout but now I've got to find another way to go. So I started to go around the rest of roundabout and all of a sudden traffic is all backed up. Because no one knows which way to go. Just like our daily decision to renew the mind, to make it new, we decide daily which way we go.

Father in heaven, we come to you in Jesus name. Thank you. Thank You that we experience God when you talk to us. And this is the way that we've learned in Jesus. Father, help our daily decisions. In Jesus name, amen.