

Sermon Title: You, B.C.  
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:17-20 (Ephesians #27)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 1-23-22

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After our little one-week hiatus, we are back to the Book of Ephesians, where this morning we are going to pick it up at Chapter 4, Verse 17; and we'll do about half of what's in the next paragraph here.

I was just thinking all week long as I worked on this passage and I thought of you; I thought, all these people are going to come to church, and I bet they would just *love* to hear how rotten they really are! And boy, do we have the passage for you! But I'm going to turn it on its head, and you are going to understand what we mean by "You B.C."—because now, you can celebrate that you are *not* in your "Before Christ" days.

Ephesians Chapter 4, Verses 17 through 24, is one of several passages in the Bible that deals with the conflict that a Christian has to deal with every day. In Christ, you are a "new creation" (Gal. 6:15; cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). But, I *know* you; you're just like me—you still know how to sin just about as well as you always did (Rom. 7:18). Therefore, if you belong to Christ, you know the battle (Matt. 26:41). You understand God's plan for His Church and for our unity in Christ, as we've been studying it in Ephesians. You *want* to be "equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). You *want* to grow up to "the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). You *want* to be encouraging and helpful to fellow believers. But you *also* know that there is an ongoing struggle between what you *know* and what you *want* to do as a Christian, versus how *hard* it is to consistently do it (Rom. 7:15, 19, 21-23).

As I said, this is one of several descriptions of that in the New Testament. In Romans 7, Paul describes it as the battle between "the law of sin" and "the law of God" (vs. 25). You obey one and break the other, at all times. In Galatians Chapter 5, it's the battle of "the Spirit against the flesh" (vs. 17)—the flesh *wars* against the Spirit to try to keep you from doing what you want to do. James 4 describes it as "your pleasures that wage war in your members" (vs. 1)—what you *want* to do, or what you *feel* like doing, gets in the way of what you know you *should* do. Over in First Peter, it is the battle between obedience to God versus "the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance" (1:14).

Here in Ephesians 4, it is "the old man" versus "the new man" (vss. 22, 24; LSB, NKJV). Your Bible might say "old self" and "new self" (e.g., NASB, ESV, HCSB); and as we finish this passage, I'll show you what it means by "the old man."

This paragraph in Ephesians that we are going to look at, starting today, majors on "the old man," and then it tells you how to—I love this—*get rid of* your "old man" (vs. 22) and "put on the new man" (vs. 24; cf. Col. 3:9-10). We don't really get rid of him, but how do you not act like him?

This is the beginning of a contrast between what you *were* in your daily life before you were saved, and what you *should be* in your daily life now.

So I started out to go all the way through Verse 24, and then I whittled that to Verse 22—and we're actually going to stop in Verse 20...but that leaves enough for us to not get bored during this week, and come back next time.

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So here's what we're going to look at, and the major point is the first point: "God's 'DON'T WALK' Sign" in Verses 17 through 19; and then we'll just begin the part about "Get Rid Of Your Old Man" as we stumble into Verse 20.

Now, what you're going to see here is pretty astounding. Ephesians Chapter 4, Verse 17. We use the New American Standard Bible here, and it says: "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind..." (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted).

For two of the verses that we have in our sights for today, I'm going to commend to you the new "Legacy Standard Bible" rendering of these verses. The Legacy Standard Bible is a further refinement of the New American Standard Bible; and mainly, the improvements are: an emphasis on greater consistency in how theme-words are translated, and key theological terms like "old man" and "new man"; and a stronger emphasis on getting you as close as possible to the original Greek and Hebrew in a manner that you can understand in English.

So, I just read you Verse 17 in our typical translation. Now look at Verse 17 in the Legacy Standard Bible: "Therefore this I say, and testify in the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind..." There's a "therefore" there; I don't like kind of downgrading it to "so." "Therefore"—because of what we've been saying, I have to take you a step further. He's referring back to what has gone before; especially, the "therefore" would reach back to Verses 1, 2, and 3—about how we need to "walk in a manner worth of" our "calling," and then be diligent "to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The word "this" refers to what follows: "Therefore," now "this"—based on what you have heard already, here is what I have for you now.

The New American Standard says: "I affirm together with the Lord." That is one of the phrases that I believe is weaker than it really ought to be translated. "Affirm together with the Lord" sounds like Paul weighed all the options, and he decided to vote that he affirms what the Lord says. That's *not* what it says! Much better is: "I testify in the Lord"—this is a *solemn* declaration *from* the Lord to you and me; this is what the Lord Himself says through His Apostle (see John 13:20; cf. 1 Cor. 14:37-28; 1 Thess. 4:2). The general principle: What the Bible teaches—that's what God teaches (see 2 Tim. 3:16; cf. Lk. 10:16; 1 Cor. 14:37). This is a solemn affirmation of the Lord's plan for you.

He's concerned about how you "walk." Remember: "walk" is one of those theme-words; we have already met it in Ephesians more than once. And I've told you that our 20th Century jargon equivalent for your "walk" would be: your "lifestyle"—how you go about living your life, what typically describes you.

And he wants you to "walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk..." You're familiar with the technical meaning of the word Gentiles—it means: those who are not Jews. But here, Paul is not using it that way; he is writing to a church that is predominantly Gentile. He's just talking about how "this is what you were like before you came to be in Christ."

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Now, what follows that, starting at the end of Verse 17 and continuing through Verse 18 and Verse 19, is a nine-part description of "the old man." It amounts to describing what you were prior to your conversion. That's why I landed on the title: "You, B.C." What were you like "before Christ" got hold of you? And I thought you might just enjoy knowing how terribly awful you are—or, *were*—apart from Christ. And as I said, we're going to flip that on its head.

Let me read you the whole section, and then we will look at the nine-part description: "Walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness."

This is here to remind us how foolish it is to go on living in old patterns of life after you've been saved (cf. Rom. 6:2). And as I said: there are nine descriptions—or, a nine-part composite description—of "the old man."

Now, I don't know of any passage in the Bible that is better for a preacher to use if he wants to inflict spiritual bruises on God's sheep. Needless to say: *Don't be like this!* We should know better! But I'm going to leave the convicting work to the Holy Spirit. We are told that Jesus said, "When [the Holy Spirit] comes, [He] will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment (Jn. 16:8). So, instead of using this passage to *pound* on you and convince you how bad you really are at the core, I want to turn it upside down. By looking at "You, B.C."—"Before Christ"—I pray you will learn to rejoice at what God has done for you "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). And remember: that's the phrase that occurs 27 times in Ephesians; that's the theme of Ephesians: it's being "in Christ" (Eph.2:6). I want you to take this as a series of encouragements "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which [we] have been called... being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1, 3).

Now, as I said: a ninefold description. As you look at the passage that I just read to you—the end of Verse 17 through the end of Verse 19—as you look at it grammatically, there are these nine key words or phrases that I think are the ninefold description. But Number 1 and Number 9 are like the bookends; *everybody* was Number 1, *everybody* was Number 9, and all the things in between are variations of how you mix things up. So, grammatically, there's a bookend kind of a thing here, but you'll see how it all fits together. We'll just take it as a list.

So, Description Number 1 of "You, B.C.": Futility of Mind. Verse 17—"Walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, *in the futility of their mind...*"

The word that is translated "futility" means: something that doesn't yield results. It's like the tree that doesn't bear fruit. It's the faucet that doesn't produce water. It doesn't do what it is supposed to do. It's *futile* to keep trying that (cf. Titus 1:16b).

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James Chapter 1, Verse 26 uses this same word to describe religion that is all talk and no action; and there in James 1, you'll see it translated, not "futile" but "worthless"; and he's talking about the "futility of...mind."

Remember on our trip to Romans Chapter 1 last week, we talked about the "noetic" effects of the Fall—the way that the fall into sin affects how people think (vs. 28), so that they can be subject to such profound and deep deceptions; to where a man thinks he's a woman, or a woman thinks that she is a man. That's an *ultimate* deception; that's *insanity!* But, in "the old man," we are corrupt enough that *we can actually believe that*, and act upon it!

So, the "mind"—Greek word *nous*—is the faculty for recognizing spiritual truth and moral goodness. The "walk" in "futility of...mind" is a walk in intellectual and moral—and I'm going to invent a word here, but I borrowed it from somebody—"resultlessness"; just not producing what your mind is supposed to produce. It is given over to wasting your thinking on things that are void of eternal value (cf. Jer. 2:13; 8:9).

I should point out to you that, to be accurate, as I said: "in the futility of [your] mind" is like the heading that covers the other eight things to follow. When we get to Verse 23, you'll find out that God is at work to help you with the *renewing* of your mind—not futile, but *renewed*, alive again. Maybe you're better acquainted with *this* verse that describes that: Romans Chapter 12, Verse 2—"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed"—that's the Greek word *metamorphoō*, from which we get "metamorphosis": a little ugly slimy crawly thing crawls in and spins around for a little while, and then it *pops out as a butterfly!* That's a *total change!* Well, that's the "transformation." "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

So as you look at "You, B.C.", start by rejoicing that you *no longer* need to be stuck in futile thinking (e.g., Titus 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:18b). God has given you His Word. His Word "equips" you for "every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17), so you can be "transformed by the renewing of" how you *think* (Jos. 1:8; Ps. 1:2). Have you ever noticed that, when you "walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16) and you are making your mind "dwell" on "good" things, "lovely" things, "excellent" things (Phil. 4:8); and you're thinking about how best that you can manifest "fruit of the Spirit" as listed in Galatians Chapter 5 (Verses 22-23); have you noticed that when you're doing that, things that used to be exciting to you now just leave you cold?—you don't care about them. That's the *victory* over the "futile mind"—the difference between "futility of mind" and a "renewed mind" (cf. 1 Pet. 4:4).

How sad when a Christian *chooses* to remain in things like fear and anxiety and doubt, when God's Word can actually change your thinking! The noetic effects of the Fall can be undone by the noetic ministry of the Holy Spirit, using the Word of God.

Secondly: Darkened In Understanding. Verse 18—"being darkened in their understanding..." "Darkened" is a verb in the perfect tense that means: it's a done deal with continuing results.

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Before you were "in Christ," the lights were off when it comes to spiritual things; it is blinding of the mind by sin (Ezek. 12:2).

And interestingly, the word "understanding" here is the same word for "mind" that was in the previous phrase, but this one has a prefix on it that lends itself to the idea of comprehending things and acting upon them. "The natural man," according to First Corinthians Chapter 2, cannot comprehend spiritual truth (vs. 14); he is locked in "darkness" (Eph. 5:8; Col. 1:13; 1 Jn. 2:11).

But as you look back at "You, B.C.", rejoice that *now* you are "in Christ"; you have the ability to *distinguish* right from wrong, to see what is really important, to *separate* good from evil like never before (1 Jn. 2:20, 27). And even more important than that: not just separate right from wrong, but separate right from a *little bit wrong*; you have the ability to discern things like never before.

Number 3—Excluded From The Life Of God. Verse 18—"excluded from the life of God..." The word translated "excluded" means: estranged, or, alienated. It means: shut out from fellowship with God (Ps. 5:4; Is. 59:2). I would say you were on the outside looking in, except that I know "you were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1)—*you weren't even looking in!* But maybe God brought to you the example of seeing Christians, and you could wonder: "Wow! What do they have that I don't?"

The other thing that's interesting about this word "excluded" is that this one is in the middle voice, that reflexive voice which means that unbelievers have *done this to themselves* (Ecc. 7:29; Jer. 9:6), and it's another one of those verbs that implies lasting results. Unbelievers are like walking dead people—spiritually dead, walking around in the physical world (cf. 1 Tim. 5:6).

They are "excluded from the life of God." "The life of God" is that life that God has in Himself, the life that He imparts to believers (Jn. 1:4; Jn. 8:12; 14:6; 20:31; Rom. 4:17). It's another way of describing eternal life. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16), "even to those who believe in His name" (Jn. 1:12).

In Ephesians 2, we saw that when we passed through it. Verses 1 through 5 says you were formerly "dead" in your sins—now you have been "made alive" in Christ. God has given us "eternal life" (Jn. 5:24).

So, as you think about "You, B.C.", remember: You were formerly on the outside of eternal life (Jn. 3:36), and *now* you possess it—and *no one* can take it away from you! (Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Pet. 1:4-5) And no one can "pluck" you out of the hands of God, who holds you (Jn. 10:28-29, KJV). You have the very life of God within you.

There's something else about "You, B.C.": Ignorance. Verse 18—"because of the *ignorance* that is in them." Now, this doesn't mean that people, before they become Christians, are stupid, and the day that you turn to Christ you get a 30-point bump in

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your I.Q. It doesn't mean that. It's talking about ignorance of spiritual things (Jn. 8:43). This includes *moral* blindness. We have *brilliant* people in our world who are saying absolute moral idiocy!

So it's not *that* kind of ignorance. "Ignorance" here is the core word behind our English word "agnostic." And you might hear the word "gnostic" or "gnosis" in there—the Greek word for "knowledge"; if you put an Alpha in front of it—or, an "A"—that negates it.

So, when you look at "You, B.C.", you can rejoice that no longer do you lack any essential knowledge about God or His moral plan for your life. Remember again the Romans 1 description: They "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (vs. 18). When you come to Christ, *you quit suppressing*—and now, you are not ignorant of what God's doing in you.

Let's take a little side-trip here. I mentioned the word "agnostic," which is derived directly from this Greek word that is here. In our world today, a lot of people consider the word "agnostic" as their safe haven—the place they can run to in order to end conversations about God or about the Bible. They'll say, "I don't *reject*. I'm not an *atheist*. I'm just *agnostic*, because I don't know for sure." And it can sound kind of scholarly and kind of cool. "I'm in the middle ground. I don't *hate* you, I'm just *agnostic* about this stuff that you're saying."

Well, no one would wear that term "agnostic" as a title so proudly if they knew how the Bible uses the word, and *especially* if they knew that the Latin translation of that word is "ignoramus"! If you want to get a little levity into the conversation—"Oh! You're an 'ignoramus'! Nice to meet you!"

I would encourage you to stop before you go out the front door, turn to your left, look at the literature rack, and find this little booklet called "Solving the God Puzzle." This gives you several very, very good, loving ways to dismantle the arguments of the ones who say that "I live in the world of 'agnosticism.'" It's a very, very helpful thing, and I hope you'll take advantage of it. Also, you don't have to just memorize it and spout it to people—you can *hand* this to somebody as well, and let them read it on their own time. It can be very unnerving to people who *think* that it's okay to say, "Well, I don't know," or, "I *can't* know." You really can; and in Christ, the *great* news is: *you do!* You're no longer ignorant.

Number 5 is: Hardness Of Heart. The middle of Verse 18—"because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the *hardness* of their *heart*." The word that is translated "hardness" literally means "hard skin," and the literal translation is: "covered over with a callus"—kind of like your heels can get when you live in a dry place like Idaho in the winter, and pump in hot, dry air in your house all the time; and it just gets to be *awful*, doesn't it?

Well, when you think about "You, B.C.", you can rejoice now that all things about your processing system have become renewed. It talks about "hardness of *heart*"—that keyword "heart," a very important Biblical, theological word. If you think of your "heart,"

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I think the best analogy you can come up with in our generation is that the "heart" is the "central processing unit" of the computer that controls your mind and all that you do. Then, if you think about the "heart" as that "central processing unit," then understand: Before Christ, all your software was *deeply* corrupted with malware, so that logic was twisted, so that the analysis of anything was foggy instead of clear; and all incoming data gets corrupted before it gets processed.

But, when you were placed in Christ, the malware was removed, and the processor was reset; and now, you—with the help of the Holy Spirit—can receive God's Word with a soft, pliable, receptive heart (Acts 16:14; cf. Jn. 8:47), and then in turn, minister to others.

Here's a really cool way that God described to Ezekiel the promise of the New Covenant, which is what we have in Christ. It's back in Ezekiel Chapter 36, Verse 26; God says: "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." It used to be stony; now, it's a soft, receptive heart.

Number 6, very closely related: Having Become Callous. Verse 19 says: "They, having become callous..." Now, in English, "they" is just a simple little pronoun; but in this case, it translates a Greek word that means: "those who are of such nature." Here is what happens to those who have hard hearts.

The word "callous" means "ceasing to feel pain or grief," or, "becoming insensitive to pain," or, "apathetic." "Having become callous"—another one of those perfect tense verbs that means this is an ongoing, persisting state—it means that an unbeliever's conscience is not responsive to the stimuli that *should* provoke it.

Over in Romans Chapter 2, Verse 15, in the section where Paul is building his case for the fact that we are all sinners—"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23)—he says we have a "conscience" that either accuses or defends us. Well, "You, B.C."—you had a conscience, but it needed to be tuned to the truth—and it *wasn't*.

Paul describes a similar concept which he applies to false teachers. Over in First Timothy Chapter 4, Verse 2, he says: "By means of the hypocrisy of liars *seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron...*" "Seared"—scorched, calloused, hard.

I have extremely dry eyes; and I also have another problem that requires that to see you and actually recognize you, I have to wear hard contact lenses. Hard contact lenses, dry eyes, and misshaped corneas—that's not a real comfortable situation. So, they have actually tried to help me retain what few little tears I have; so the doctors have closed all of what they call "puncta"—they're the things that your tears drain into. You know how, when you cry, it runs back to the back of your throat, and then you sniffle? I can't do that. I produce so little tears, *all* the tears that I produce either evaporate—that's most of them; or if you ever see me and it looks like I'm being really tender and emotional and I'm just shedding a tear—it's just running out, okay? I'm just an emotional klutz.

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The way they did that, I thought of this verse. This otherwise very nice person, that I like a lot, gave me a series of numbing shots—which were not fun—right in the corner of my eye. They finally got me all numbed up, and they would poke me with a pin and say, "Let me know when you can't feel this anymore." I'd say, "Give me more! Give me more!" And then, they came at me with what looked like a miniature soldering iron; and I could feel the heat as they got close; and I could hear the sizzle as they seared the flesh, hoping that it would heal shut. And, as a matter of fact, the stupid thing healed open twice; three times I went through this! And there was smoke, and it stank! I've never been to the branding iron, but...No, thank you!

That's what your conscience is like! With a hard heart, you've become so callous that you don't respond as you should (Matt. 13:15). So when you think of "You, B.C.", rejoice! God has quickened your conscience so that now, as you "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18; cf. 1 Pet. 2:2), your conscience becomes more and more accurately a reflection of God's standard of right and wrong (Prov. 4:18; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 5:14). What a thing it is to be "renewed" in Christ! (2 Cor. 4:16; Col. 3:10) You might even say: "I once was lost, but now am found" ("Amazing Grace," 1779, John Newton).

Number 7—Given Over To Sensuality. Verse 19—"They, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality..." Here's another word that you heard last week: "gave over" or "given over"; three times in Romans Chapter 1, it says: "God gave them over..." Well, this is saying that "You, B.C."—you *gave yourself over* to sensuality. The verb form is reflexive; it means that.

The word for "sensuality" is a Greek word—"sensuality" is an accurate translation; but in English, when we see that word, we usually think of sexual things; and the King James translated this word "lasciviousness," which is almost always associated with sexual sins. But the Greek word is actually broader than that; it means: acknowledging no restraints, daring to do whatever your desires dictate. "Wantonness" is another word that would do justice to this Greek word. It means: surrendering to your feelings, surrendering to your passions (e.g., Phil. 3:19; 2 Pet. 2:14).

This principle is the reason that the advertising industry is so successful: It's driven by playing on the fact that people want what they want, when they want it; and if they don't know that you want it, by golly, they'll *tell you* that you want it, and you *need* it! "But wait! Call now, and we'll add another one to it!"

When I was a teenager, the very worldly motto of my generation was: "If it feels good, do it!" That's the *perfect* description of our society; but now, it's no longer the motto of the rebellious young generation—it's the *unwritten law of the land*! That's where we live: "Given over to sensuality."

But as you ponder "You, B.C.", you can rejoice that now, in Christ, you no longer need to be enslaved to your passions, to your selfish desires. You have a higher calling. You have a more glorious Master (Rom. 6:6, 14, 17-18).



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Number 8—"For The Practice Of Every Kind Of Impurity." Verse 19—"they... have given themselves over to sensuality *for the practice of every kind of impurity.*" The word "practice" comes from the Greek word that literally means "working" or "energizing"; it's related to our word "ergonomics"—that's the study of making things work efficiently. Some places, it's used to describe what a person does for a living. So in other words, this is saying: this is what people do as a major pastime; this is the theme of their life—"the practice of every kind of impurity." The word "impurity" here indeed has the Greek word "all" or "every" attached to it, so it describes every kind of impure activity. Anything that isn't godly—the world seems to love it. It's describing a person with *no regard* for right and wrong, as defined by God.

As you ponder "You, B.C.", you can rejoice that now you are in Christ, so you have spiritual resources to *resist* that constant downward pull of sin and temptation (cf. Ezek. 36:27; Phil. 2:12-13; Heb. 13:20-21)—the things that you *used to* enjoy (cf. Rom. 6:21).

And Number 9—Greediness. Verse 19—"for the practice of every kind of impurity *with greediness.*" "Greediness" is simply the attitude that says: "I want what I want!" (Prov. 12:12; 21:10; 1 Jn. 2:16) You've heard the phrase—and this is said with a straight face, as if it's a good thing—that you need to be "Looking out for Number One!" Well, the flaw in that is that it presumes that *you* are the number one most important person—and *you're not!* God is Number One! And if you're in a room with at least one other person, who is the most important person in that room, for a Christian? The other one (see Phil. 2:3-4). How can I serve *that person*? That's the opposite of "You, B.C."

From the grammar of the text, I can say "greediness" is the sphere of attitude in which all of these things exist. "Futility of the mind" and "greediness"—those are like the bookends; everything contained in between is the different volumes of the encyclopedia of just how screwed up you were, before you came to the Savior.

As you think back to "You, B.C.", give thanks to the Lord that by His grace, you no longer need to be motivated solely by what you want for yourself; now, you can want what *God* wants! You can actually regard *others* and their wellbeing as more important than your own (cf. Mk. 10:44).

Now, isn't that just a *wonderful* picture of people you don't want to be around, people you don't want to be like? My friends, that was "You, B.C.", "Me, B.C." Paul painted it so ugly for us, so that when we get to his command to "put off...the old man" (Eph. 4:22, NKJV), we are going to want to do it.

And before we stop for today, let's just touch on that next point. Number 1 is: "God's 'DON'T WALK' Sign"—Don't walk this way. Number 2 is: Get Rid Of Your Old Man. I really like that title; it isn't exactly right, but it just sounds so cool. Again, Verses 20 through 22; we'll just stop at Verse 20 for today: "But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit..."

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We'll stop at this point, but just ponder the beginning of that sentence: "But you did not learn Christ in this way..." Describing that "old man," describing the "B.C. version" of you—that really is ugly. But now that you're in Christ, you can rejoice that, spiritually speaking, "You, B.C." is *ancient history*! You are "no longer" a "slave to sin" (Rom. 6:6). "Christ redeemed" you (Gal. 3:13), He went and paid the price for your freedom (Matt. 20:28; Acts 13:29; Rom. 8:1). You no longer live "in the flesh," you now dwell in the category of "in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9). You are now a "new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Next time we dive into our text, we will see what God asks us to do—which He enables us to do—in order to "put on the new man" (Eph. 4:24, LSB). It's a matter of walking "in a manner worthy of the calling with which [we] have been called" (Eph. 4:1).

Now, I need a new title. I thought "You, B.C." was pretty clever, but what do I do for next time? "You, A.D."? "Get Rid of Your Old Man"—Anti-Dad...I don't know how that's going to work out.

The title might not be clever; but, my friends, I have to ask: Are you still "B.C."? I mean, is this describing what is in your heart? Or, do you *hate* these things that describe the "old man"? Are you a "new creature" in Christ?

Let me close with that great passage in Second Corinthians Chapter 5, Verses 20 and 21—"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ..." Now, stop there for a second. What is an "ambassador"? An ambassador is a person who represents a government to a foreign country and lives on foreign soil on behalf of the home country. "We are ambassadors for Christ"—we belong to Christ; we are citizens of His kingdom, we are citizens of the kingdom of God (cf. Phil. 3:20). But we live here in this place where we are "strangers and aliens" (Eph. 2:19). Paul is speaking on behalf of himself and all of his team and all of the other Apostles. "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

Now, if you are all of those things—those nine awful, ugly facets of the "old man"—remember I told you, most of them are in the perfect tense: it's an ongoing situation. Well, how can you be "dead" and be "reconciled to God"? You can't do it! It's beyond you. The only way a dead person can come alive is by a power that he doesn't have! Christ *makes* you alive. "You were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), but He "made" you "alive" (vs. 5). You can't come into the presence of a perfectly righteous God, as unrighteous as you are. You need a *perfect* righteousness, and you can't achieve that; so you need *His* righteousness "credited" to your account (Rom. 4:3; cf. Phil. 3:9).

So, "we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." How could that ever happen? Verse 21: "He made Him who knew no sin"—that's Jesus (1 Pet. 2:22; cf. Heb. 7:26)—"to be sin on our behalf..." What was going on when Jesus was on that cross and He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46)? That was when He was experiencing all the wrath of God against all sin that we all deserve (Is. 53:5-8, 11). "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"—in Christ. And that's the theme of the Book of Ephesians.

Sermon Title: You, B.C.

Scripture Text: Eph. 4:17-20 (Ephesians #27)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Date: 1-23-22

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Are you a "new creature" in Christ? Oh, I hope so. I pray so. I *beg* you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God!

Let's pray:

*Our Father, we look at what You have done for us: that You are both just—righteous—and the justifier of those who will receive the free gift of eternal life. Father, some of us have come to be in Christ—all to the praise of Your glory, because we could never do that—and yet, we find it so easy to fall back into those old habits, to live like the "old man". Father, You know what needs to be done. Your Spirit is the one who convicts concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; and so, we open our hearts to You right now, and ask You to do whatever needs to be done. Oh, most glorious of all would be for You to rescue a soul from the domain of darkness and transfer them to the kingdom of Your dear Son by calling that one to put his or her faith in Christ alone for salvation. If there is something else that is holding us back from putting on the "new man," and even before we study the passage, please: teach us, convict us, mold us, shape us to be as useful as possible for Your glory. Thank You for what You do for us through Your Son, our Savior, in whose name we pray. Amen.*