

Ephesians 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. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ!- ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Guys, you know how it is. You buy your wife an outfit that she would look just great in. And when she gets it, she loves it. But then it gets hung in the closet. Several months later, it is still there. Yes, that greatest outfit that she owns never gets put on. Why? Well, she is not sure exactly how it will look on her. And so there it sits, the most perfect outfit never worn.

Gals, you know how it is. You buy husband a great suit that makes him look just awesome. You can't wait to see him put in on. And there it hangs in the closet, collecting lint. Why? Because he is not sure that suits are his style. He is not sure that he wants to wear it out and about. And so there it sits, the most perfect outfit never worn.

God, you know how it is. You buy your people the most perfect outfit ever. You buy it with your Son's own blood. You give it to them in their baptism. But then it goes in the closet. Your people are not sure they want to wear it out and about. They are not sure it is quite their style. And so there it sits, the most perfect outfit never worn.

Yes, all too often we as Christians walk around in this world looking just like everyone else when we could look just perfect wearing the outfit of righteousness that our God has given to us.

It seems God's people have always had a sinful tendency to want to look just like everyone else, to like their unbelieving peers. In our bible study, we began our look at the Kings of Israel and Judah. Although, you know, there would have never been a single king of Israel or Judah had the people of God been content to just wear the outfit of righteousness that God had given them to wear. The people of Israel, out of all the nations, they alone had a king who was perfect and holy, God himself. But the Israelites didn't like to wear that out and about the other nations. They wanted to look like everyone else and everyone else had a king.

Eventually God told them that if they were going to continue to refuse to wear the outfit of righteousness that He had given them, He would allow them to wear a robe of royalty, but that it would be trouble for them all. And as we begin and continue to read through the books of 1 and 2 Kings, we see this word come true time and time again.

Looking like everyone else around always seems to lead one into trouble. It is a truth that we teach our children when they begin picking friends and making decisions. But all too often, we as children and as adults do not live this truth.

We, as God's children, shouldn't look like everyone else for one very good reason. We are not like everyone else. We have been clothed with the very righteousness of Christ. And that makes us look different.

But exactly what does wearing the righteousness of God look like in every day life. Well, Paul offers in his letter to the Ephesians many snapshots of exactly what it looks like when one wears the righteousness of Christ. Today we will focus on three of his pictures.

The first picture we see could be anyone wearing the righteousness of Christ. We see a person walking around with a clean mouth. And no, we are not talking about Crest and Listerine clean. We are talking about what goes out of one's mouth. A person wearing the righteousness of Christ makes sure that the words that go forth from their mouths are edifying and uplifting to all those who hears them. They refuse to speak impure words. They don't tell dirty jokes. At school, they are noticed for not cursing and swearing. At work, they are noticed for not gossiping. At the get-together, they are noticed for not sharing in the impure talk that is floating around.

The next picture that Paul gives to us that we see reveals a husband and a wife walking side by side, both clothed in their outfits of righteousness. The husband and wife submit to one another in love. The husband loves his wife like Christ loves the church. The wife submits to her husband's God-given headship in marriage. They forgive one another rather than allowing sin to drag them apart. They persevere in marriage until death parts them.

The last snapshot that we see is that of a young person walking around wearing the righteousness of Christ. They put aside the desire to look like everyone else. They are different and they are proud of it. They

obey their parents and they show them respect understanding that their parents have been given to them by God for their good. They even admit the respect that they have for their parents around their friends.

Yes, wearing the righteousness of Christ does make one stand out in the crowd. Holiness and righteousness are not things that are commonly worn. Sensuality, coarse talk, and selfishness seem to be the style of the day.

But that is not what we have been given to wear. Today, we are called to take off any of the worldly clothes that we have been wearing, those clothes that have made us look so much like our world. We are called to place upon ourselves the righteousness of Christ, that righteousness that was given to us at our baptism. We are to open the closet and take out that outfit that we have been afraid to wear out in public. We are to put in on and we are to live in it everywhere we go.

Yes, people will notice us. They may even notice our outfit. And when they do, they might just ask us where we got it. And when they do, we will be blessed to point them to the Father who bought that outfit for us at Calvary and gave it to us at the font. Yes, if we wear the outfit of righteousness, the world will see our good deeds and give glory to our Father in heaven.

We cannot allow the outfit of Christ righteousness to sit in our closets, saving it to be worn on our burial day. This outfit is not just for death, but it is for each day of our life as well. We must wear it everywhere we go or otherwise it might just not fit on that last day when we are called to rest.

Yes, Paul, in our text, rebuked the Ephesians Christians for looking all too much like their unbelieving peers. And we must allow his words to find their way into our ears as well. We must ask ourselves if we truly look any different than our unbelieving peers whether it is at work, at school, or at the get-together. Because if we do not, it is evidence that in our closet is hanging the most perfect outfit never worn.

Today, by confessing our sin, we remove the outfits of sin we have been wearing around that have allowed us to fit in so well with an unbelieving world. And then through God's forgiveness, we are again clothed in the righteousness and holiness of Christ. God Himself today takes that outfit of righteousness out of our closets and places it upon us again.

And if we dare to look in the mirror, we will be surprised exactly how good we look in it for our God knows what is best for us and has given it to us. Indeed, God is the one who takes us and places that outfit of righteousness on us. We simply need to walk out the door in it.

Christians, you know how it is. You get a perfect outfit from God. You wear it around everywhere you go. It transforms your thoughts, your actions, your everything. Your life is blessed and others around you are always asking where you got such a perfect outfit. You get to point them to Jesus. Yes, there is it, the most perfect outfit ever worn. Amen.