

# The Character Issue (Eph 4:17-24)

## I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. In recent weeks, Bob Dole has attacked President Clinton's character. He has raised what has been referred to as the "character issue."
- B. We need to talk about the "character issue."
- C. We don't need to talk about it as it relates to the Presidential race; we need to talk about it as it relates to us.
- D. Here, Paul paints two ethical pictures. One is of the worldly character & and the other is of godly character.

## II. THE WORLDLY CHARACTER, vv 17-19.

- A. Futile in their thinking, vv 17-19.
  1. Futility suggests emptiness, vanity.
  2. The thought is that their minds think about things which lead to nothing; therefore, their lives are futile.
- B. Darkened in their understanding, v 18.
  1. This refers to spiritual understanding.
  2. They don't know what God requires; they're ignorant.
- C. Hardened in their heart, vv 18-19.
  1. Their hearts have become calloused.
  2. They have become so involved in sin that they no longer have a conscience (v 19).
  3. Because they're ignorant & hard-hearted, they're alienated from God.
- D. Abandoned in licentiousness, v 19.
  1. "Licentiousness" refers to that excess which is indecent.
  2. They don't care who knows about their sin.

## III. GODLY CHARACTER, vv 20-24.

- A. Taught differently, vv 20-21.
  1. Being taught about Jesus causes us to realize that he does not approve of sin, v 20.
  2. The truth is in Jesus, v 21.
- B. Life differently, v 22.
  1. Paul told the Ephesians they could no longer live as the Gentiles lived.
  2. This text refers to repenting.
  3. The old self needs to be destroyed.
    - a. Corrupt--it's no good.
    - b. Deluded--it's deceptive.
- C. Think differently, v 23.
  1. We must be "renewed in the spirit" of our minds.
  2. This means we change our thinking habits.
  3. Paul tells these Christians that "thieves must give up stealing." In order to do so, they need to change their thinking.
- D. Dress differently, v 24.
  1. We need to "put on" the new self.
  2. The "new self" is like God.
    - a. Righteous.
    - b. Holy.