

EPHESIANS

GRACE & GLORY

COMMENTARY AND QUESTIONS | EPHESIANS 4:17-25 | NEW LIFE PART 1

Ephesians 4 discusses two primary ways that believers are new creations. The first of the appeals takes place in the beginning of the chapter when Paul states that believers should walk in a manner worthy of their calling. The second appeal is introduced in the present text which contrast the old self and the new self. Paul logic is simply this, "Since God has created a marvelous new entity in the world called the church, and because of this unique creation, with its unique unity as the Body of Christ, and its need to be build up in love, here is how each believer should live as a member of the Body." With that, the passage we will look at can be divided into two parts.

The Old Nature (vv. 17-24) – Paul uses the word "Gentiles" to identify those who walk according to the old nature. Gentiles in this passage do not refer to a specific race but to a specific kind of person. Gentiles are pagan, unregenerate, non-believing people. Gentiles denote an active rebellion against God. In our world today, Gentiles are people that openly and unapologetically refuse to worship God. As you read through this passage, pay attention to how different the old and new self should look in daily life! There are six specific characteristics of Gentiles:

1. Intellectually Futile (v. 17b) – Here's a question for you, "What do you fill your mind with and what about the mind is important?" So much of how you live is dependent of what goes on in your mind! Therefore, because non-Christians and Christians think differently, they will also act differently. John MacArthur said in regards to this verse, "Christianity is cognitive before it is experiential. It is our thinking that makes us consider the Gospel..."
2. Darkened in their understanding (V. 18a)
3. Alienated from God (v. 18b)
4. Ignorant of God's Truth (v. 18) – Men are ignorant of God's truth not because the information is missing but because of the hardness of their heart (Cf. Romans 1:21-22,24; 2 Corinth. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:7).
5. Spiritually and Mentally Calloused (v. 19a) – A constant and on-going pursuit of sin will ultimately lead to apathy and passivity regarding God's truth!
6. Darkened, Pursuit of Pleasure (v. 19b) – Can you see the flow of Paul's thought? After becoming intellectually futile, ignorant of God's truth, calloused or apathetic towards God's truth, one begins to live in sensuality and impurity!

Verse 20 marks a transition within this passage. Paul contrasts how Gentiles are to live and how those who have "learned Christ" are to live. Notice that a Christians is not simply someone who knows and agrees with facts about God or Jesus. While knowing things about God is certainly good, the point here is that Christians have a literal relationship with Jesus! Do you have a relationship with Jesus?

Paul may seem to be calling Christians to legalism in verses 22-24, but we need to remember what Paul has been saying and arguing for this entire book. Paul does a wonderful job at connecting how we are to live with the Gospel. Christians are not called to obey just because we are supposed to. Rather, we are called to think about (renew the mind) what Christ has done for us which then affects the way we live. Paul logic is simply this, "How can someone that has gone from dead in their sins to alive in Christ not deeply desire to follow and obey Christ?"

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Questions:

1. Read Ephesians 4:17-31. Write down any thoughts or insights that come from it.
2. Describe who Gentiles are and how they walk in your own words.
3. Explain why Christians are called to live differently. What is it about the Gospel that calls for a difference in living.
4. Read verses 18-19 slowly. In your own words describe the progression that a Gentile goes through.
5. Why would Paul warn Christians about this progression?
6. Read verses 20-21 slowly. How do you go about cultivating a relationship with Jesus? Do you find it difficult to do this? What are some things that tend to keep you from walking with God deeply?
7. If a newer believer were to come up to you and ask you, "How do you renew you mind", what would you say?
8. Explain this statement, "Being a Christian is about becoming what you are."