

Ephesians
Renewal In Christ
Ephesians 4:17-32
August 10th, 2025

I. Introduction – Christianity & Mere Moralism

The Gospel we proclaim is first one of new life in Christ, and then one of morals. This is a whole lot different than mere moralism. For without the life of Christ, the moralism part won't work. It's like bearing fruit without having any roots. As Christ said to His disciples, so He says to us: "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). This is absolutely central to our life as Christians. We cannot participate in the economy of grace unless we first receive God's grace. We cannot become a life-giver, if we have not first received life. Alienated from God, we come thirsty to Him; but then, in Christ, we are grafted into new life. We abide in Him, and so we become actual Christians—not stoics, not deists, not humanists—but branches abiding in Christ's vine, and so we bear much fruit.

II. Text – Ephesians 4:17-32

17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. . . .

III. Life Without God (vv. 19-17)

Why do those outside of Christ behave in this way? They behave this way because they are alienated from the life of _____. They have been cut off from the branch. They are not 'plugged into' the fountain of life—the fountain that streams forth with the very life they need. And so out of desperate thirst, ravenous hunger, they throw all inhibition to the wind and seek to satisfy their gaping hunger—a hunger which they will never be able to satisfy. Why? Because we were not made for this world. They are empty of God, and filled with vice.

IV. Taught By Christ (vv. 20-21)

As Christians, we know better. The world outside of the Church, they're ignorant, alienated from the life of God, and so they with greediness pursue that life elsewhere. This is a _____ ignorance, for the Light has come into the world, the Light which gives light to all men—but they shut their eyes to Him (John 3:19-20). The world, remaining in willful ignorance of Christ, pursues the life they desire in _____, abusing creatures in this pursuit, and yet they remain thirsty. Creatures make for bad gods. They cannot bear the burden of divinity. They cannot satisfy our thirst for God. But Christians, we know better. We have come to Jesus Christ. We have been taught in Him. We have life in Him—the life that the rest of the world is desperately seeking after.

V. Sanctification (vv. 22-24)

This life given to us in Christ is something we grow up into. Elsewhere Paul calls us a _____: we are a wild olive shoot that is grafted onto the olive tree (Rom. 11). We are dead branches, dead in Adam, and we were grafted by divine grace into Jesus, the second Adam. Now our life is being renewed. This is what theologians speak of as _____. It is the process by which we are made holy. Being holy is becoming

truly _____: it is becoming human as God intended humanity to be. We are set apart as God renews and recreates our humanity. It is a renewal that comes as we once again, after long lying dead and rotting in our sin, are 'plugged into' God, and capable of drinking from the life of God, which is our proper life.

- Westminster Larger Catechism, Q75: "What is sanctification?":

A: Sanctification is a work of God's grace, whereby they whom God hath, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy, are in time, through the powerful operation of his Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

VI. Put Off, Put On (vv. 25-32)

Sanctification involves putting off our old habits leftover from the *take-what-you-can-get* economy, and putting on the new ways of God's *gracious* economy. Becoming a Christian means that we go from being selfish and stingy to givers and contributors and ministers of God's grace.

Put off LYING. Put on TRUTH-TELLING. Paul says to put away lying, and "let each of one of you speak truth with his neighbor." It is not enough for you simply stop lying. You have to start speaking the truth. You don't get to be silent.

Put off STEALING. Put on GIVING. Paul doesn't just say the thief should no longer steal but that he should find honest employment. That is true, but partial. You must find honest employment. But that's not enough. Our citizenship is in _____. We are a part of a much greater country. A country whose law is higher, better, more glorious than the laws of earthly kingdoms. The thief must no longer steal. He must find honest work—so that he may have something to _____ to him who has need.

Put off CORRUPTING SPEECH. Put on GRACIOUS SPEECH. The godly man does not speak from a corrupt heart, and his speech doesn't corrupt those who hear him. Instead, a godly man's words are life and grace for those who hear him. A godly man's words strengthen, encourage, exhort, and promote godliness and life. They don't promote or encourage sin. They don't cause a brother to stumble. They don't bring to mind filthy thoughts. They don't tempt a brother to anger or envy or lust or discouragement. They build up and bless.

Put off BITTERNESS. Put on KINDNESS. We often forget that *we* once were the thief, the liar, the foul-mouthed, the lustful, the *take-what-I-can-get* sort of person, and then God welcomed us into His Home. We got to come inside, put on Christ, be renewed, and have life. But when we forget this, put off our old ways, and put on *self-righteousness* instead of true holiness, we put on the worst kind of pride: the pride of being a "good Christian." Thus, we end up back outside of God's House, isolated from His people, harboring evil thoughts, holding onto grudges. We end up outside, nursing wounds, instead of enjoying the fullness of God's life, and sharing it with others. But this, too, must be put off. God calls out to the bitter, the unforgiving, the angry, the resentful, the unloving, and He calls you back into His Household of grace.

VII. Come & Welcome to Jesus Christ