

Ephesians 4:17-32 – Living The New Life

How should we live? What does a Christian life look like? Paul is now teaching us. In conversion, a very great change happens to us. But what should we do afterwards?

1. Do not live like the unsaved (v17-21)

Verse 17 tells us that Christians must be different to unsaved people. Paul tells us the condition of unsaved people. It is not a nice picture, but it is a true one. Their minds are dark and ignorant. They do not have the life of God in them. They walk according to their own wisdom, not truth, with blind hearts. The “light” that they follow is simply their own desires. Even when they go far into sin, they do not then hate sin, but desire more (v17-19). But Christians have received life and light; they have God's truth and Christ's Spirit to guide them – how can they live like that? The world lives for quick pleasure – drink, stolen gain, immoral relationships; but the world is under God's judgment and will be damned. How can we live like that? If we are truly saved people, our lives must be clearly different to the lives of the lost.

2. How to live like a saved person (v22-24)

Paul's teaching has two parts: first, put off the “old man”, secondly, put on the “new man” (v22-24). We are both to war against remaining sin, and to struggle to grow and promote graces in our lives. We cannot only do one, but must do both. The “old man” means the ways of the remains of our sinful nature. When Christ saves us, he destroys the reign of sin, but he does not completely remove it. It is our task to fight against and destroy what remains. What is the “new man” like? The new nature is like God – righteous and holy. We must follow its ways. We carried the image of fallen Adam; now we must carry the image of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:49). The foundation is to have our minds renewed (v23). This means, to study, learn and understand truth. It means to change our thinking. We have learnt the world's corrupt, ungodly thinking. We must work to replace it. All God-pleasing churches are teaching churches; and this is why Satan works so hard to spread false teaching and heresy. Our goal is to become like God (v24) – to become like him in all our ways.

3. What needs doing and not doing (v25-32)

What, then, must we do? Paul explains godliness, by teaching us God's law. He teaches the duties of the 6th, 8th and 9th commandments (the others come later). We must get rid of lying, but speak the truth (v25). Avoid false promises – admit when something is wrong, and our society will change! We are a body – how can one part lie to another without harm? In v26-27 he tells us to be self-controlled, even when angry. Anger, if let loose, destroys instead of building up. We must watch ourselves clearly; the devil is trying hard to ruin us, so we cannot leave the door open and let him get in. In v28 Paul teaches us to work hard and give to those who are in need. This is the way to fight against the sin of stealing; honest labour and charity. Then in v29-30 he teaches us that our speech must build people up and help them. We must get rid of bad speech, like gossiping and back-biting. This grieves God's Holy Spirit who has come to live with us, and chases away his influence from our life. We must avoid all kinds of fighting even in thoughts and attitudes against our neighbours; instead, we must love them as we love ourselves. We must remember how much Christ has done for us, and so serve others too. This is what Christ tells us to do.