

## STUDY 8 – EPHESIANS 4:17 - 32

1. Summarize this passage in several points, highlighting the main themes.

Based on his argument to this point, Paul exhorts the Ephesian Christians to be who they are. At one time they were not God's people, but now they are (2:11-14), and so they should live their lives according to this new reality, not the old. In their lives before Christ, they lived like the Gentiles do, ignorant of God, and his moral standards. But now, they are different: they know Christ, and share in the divine life, and by the Spirit their minds are being renewed, so that their new manner of living becomes more holy and righteous, as God intended people, or His "image", to live.

Paul continues by using a series of contrasts: old self vs new self, truth verses falsehood, by giving examples of what he means: speak the truth, not falsehood to one another and our neighbours, especially in the church, for we are one body; be angry, but deal with your anger relationally so that the devil cannot set a hook that can break relationships between people; thieves should stop stealing, but work, and become givers; when you speak, build up, don't tear down; rather than bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, slander, be kind and forgive, just as God has forgiven you. All of this is pleasing to God, but to continue in these ways grieves the Holy Spirit.

Paul continues to expand on what type of lifestyle is worthy of the calling we have received. Now the focus falls onto personal godliness. Notice again the use of the word 'walk' in 4:17. (and 5:2)

2. Trace the downward path of evil in verses 17-19.

Gentiles are: Literally blinded in their thinking > making them ignorant and hard at heart to the one true God > leading to alienation from God > all of which creates a callous heart (Greek: without a sense of right and wrong) that is given over to all sorts of sinful behaviour.

3. What does Paul say we should discard? What should we be putting on? What is at the heart of this transformation? (v.20-24)

Paul says we should DISCARD the Old Self (literally old humanity/man) [see Romans 6:6] - in other words, we actively stop living like our old sinful selves...

Paul says we should PUT ON the New Self (literally new humanity/man) [see Romans 6:4] - in other words, we actively start living like our new creation selves, which we became when we placed our faith in Christ. (see Ephesians 2:1-10)

God's personal empowering presence in the believers' life, the Holy Spirit, enables to make this transformation.

4. Paul now gives five instances of how Christian holiness works out in practice.

	<b>Put off</b>	<b>Put on</b>	<b>Why</b>
<b>v. 25</b>	Falsehood	Truth	Members of one another
<b>v.26-27</b>	Anger	Deal With Anger	Devil seeks opportunity
<b>v.28</b>	Stealing	Work	Generosity
<b>v.29-30</b>	Corrupt Talk	Good talk	Builds up not tares down
<b>v.31-32</b>	Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, slander, malice	Kindness	Grieves Holy Spirit

5. What do we learn are the overriding motivations for doing this? (v.20-21, 24, 30, 32) Notice again what we learn about the Trinity in this section.

There are of course relational issues with one another in the church, and with our neighbours outside the church that are in sight here. However, the overriding issue is the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If we are created anew by God our Father, when we come to faith in Christ, and have been sealed, literally marked by God as his own, and indwelt by the person of the Holy Holy Spirit, then to live according to our old, unredeemed, sinful nature - the old self - means we are falling back into our old ways, when we were dead in sin, alienated from God, and outside of Christ and His Church, and living as if we are not new in Christ, which grieves God Himself, the Holy Spirit. As we have discussed before, much of Paul's practical theology is saying, "Be who you are, not who you used to be". Live according to your new, redeemed nature in Christ, not according to your old, unredeemed, sinful nature. Ultimately, this is the field in which "spiritual warfare" is waged; in our daily lives where the devil seeks opportunities to destroy us, and the Church.

6. '...holiness is not a condition into which we drift' (Stott). Look back over Chapter 4. Identify where you need to take action.

This is a very personal section. Consider in your life where you may be "walking" in the old self, especially in the specific areas Paul mentioned. Write them down, and then prayerfully ask the Lord to help you to change. Sometimes our old self, its habits, and manners, can be difficult to change. This is why we need the Holy Spirit, who transforms our minds, and consciences, and gives us the strength to live it out. Sometimes we may need help, by confessing these things to a trusted Christian friend or mentor (James 5:16). Sometimes we need to go to someone we have sinned against, and make it right.

7. Why do you think Paul reminds us here of the forgiveness of Christ in 4:32 and his death in 5:2?

This reminds me of the Lord's Prayer: forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. When we consider what Paul has said, that before Christ we were sinners, who in the hardness of our hearts committed all sorts of unrighteous acts against people, and offended God in the process, and yet He forgave us in Christ, how much more then should we do the same to those who have sinned against us?

In 5:2 Paul says: "And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Christ is the prime example of what Paul is saying in 4:17-32. The bottom line is to live a life of love. And love is seen most clearly when Christ sacrificed his own life, on our behalf, as an offering to God. We are encouraged to do the same now, to live lives that are fragrant offerings to God, which is our act of love and gratitude for what he has done for us in Christ.

8. What has this section revealed to us about why Paul felt the need to pray the prayers he did earlier?

In short, Christians need to fully understand what God has done for them, and who they are 'in Christ' if they are ever expected to live lives worthy of this reality, by the power of the Holy Spirit. At the end of the day, we need God to reveal these truths in our hearts, and to also empower us by his Spirit to both believe them, and live accordingly. Prayer is therefore critical. These are, after all, matters of the Spirit.

9. In a sentence or two, what would you say is the main point of this passage?

Christian, be who you are in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, not who you were outside of Christ, when you did not know him.