

Scripture Text

Ephesians 4:17-24

Context

Paul has begun Chapter 4 urging us to live a life worthy of the calling we have received in Christ. Then in verse 1-6 he has spoken about our unity in Christ, and verse 7-16 about how God has gifted the individual members of the church in unique ways to build up the body by speaking the truth in love. Now, Paul talks about how this truth in love is to be practically worked out in our lives, by being renewed in the spirit of our minds, leading us to put off the old man and put on our new man. This is the process of sanctification (or being made holy) in the Christian life.

Observation and Meaning

- What is ironic about Paul telling his hearers to no longer walk as gentiles?
- What does Paul describe as being the root of the problem with those who live improper lives?
- What does Paul say has happened to us that leads us to no longer live in this way (vs 20-21)
- What does Paul say we actively do in conversion?
- What is this new self like?
- Paul refers to an ongoing action that we are continually to be involved in. What is that?)

Big Idea

Knowing Christ leads us to put off the old man in repentance and put on the new self in faith, transforming our lives to become holy.

Connecting To The Whole Bible's Story Line

Where sin reigned in our lives through our deadened hearts, Christ has come to make our hearts alive to God, by which we can turn from sin and live by faith in Christ who makes us holy.

Sermon Outline

1. The root of unholiness (vs 17-19)
 - A dead heart, leading to being separated from the life of God, leading to evil desires.
2. The root of holiness (vs 20-24)
 - Made new through conversion
 - Evidenced in repentance and faith
3. The habits of holiness (vs 23)
 - Renewing our minds
 - Repentance and faith

Application

- If those formally gentiles are no longer to walk as gentiles, what does this mean for us about our new identity and how we are to live our lives?
- If the state of our heart is at the root of our conduct, what does that mean for how we try to deal with our sin?
- What does a true learning of the truth of Christ lead us to do?
- What are we to continually do as part of the habit of holiness?
- How does this passage give further clarity to Paul's instruction for those in the church to speak 'the truth in love' (vs 15) to each other? What kind of 'truth in love' can we be sharing with others in our church as we pursue holiness together?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger story line of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (e.g. "for", "it", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?

What is the situation of the author and of the readers?

Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?

Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.