

**UNIT 5 EPHESIANS LESSON 8****"SECOND CHARGE: TO BREAK WITH PAGAN WAYS"****STUDY PASSAGE: Ephesians 4:17-5:20**

We come now to one of the most detailed statements about Christian living in the New Testament. Recall again that this is in the context of 4:1, which again rests on all the doctrinal teaching of chapters 1-3.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE WAY THE GENTILES LIVE - vs17-19

Here "Gentiles" is being used in the sense of "pagans" or people who do not know God. They live a life that is characterised by lack of a real object; it speaks of the direction in which pagan humanity is facing.

The general statement is then followed by four statements that fill out its meaning:

1. Darkened in their understanding, or, minds are in the dark; i.e., knowledge without wisdom.
2. Alienated from the life of God i.e., estranged or cut off from God.
3. Lost all sensitivity: no longer feeling pain and sorrow either for others, or in one's own consciousness.
4. Abandoned themselves to licentiousness: i.e., outrageous conduct of any kind, a life without any care for personal standards or social sanctions.

This whole section may be compared with Romans 1:18ff.

Obviously, Christians are to be different, and Paul goes on to spell out this difference by using the metaphor of putting off old clothes and putting on new ones. Perhaps the key phrase of doing this is found in v23. "To be renewed in the spirit of your minds" or, to put it another way, "Your hearts and your minds must be made completely new" (*Good News Bible*). This fits in with the general statement made about the Gentiles in v.17. It also reminds us that although Paul goes on to speak imperatively of what we must both cease from doing and commence doing, this is only possible because we are in Christ. Being in Christ involves such a renewal in the spirit of our minds. So we are only commanded to do what God has already enabled us to do. To seek to carry out these commands without the inner change wrought by the Spirit is futile.

Notice the description of the two natures and the extent of the contrast made between them. These are to be dealt with decisively. One is to be put off, the other put on. One is to be decisively rejected and the other accepted, and used as the expression of the renewed mind.

**PUT OFF****PUT ON****COMMENTS**Eph. 4:25Falsehood or
LyingEph. 4:25

speaking the truth

a body cannot function unless the organs are honest with each other. When I test the surf, I have to be able to believe what my foot tells me.

Eph. 4:26anger that leads
to sinEph. 4:26

anger that is under control

anger which leads to a continual estrangement is wrong. The devil's delight is to destroy fellowship.

Eph.4:28

stealing

Eph. 4:28working to earn an
honest living

the object of Christian labour is not to have, but to give.

Eph. 4:29

evil talk

Eph. 4:29-30helpful words that build
others up

your speech can be a means of the Spirit working in the lives of others. He is grieved, when instead, your speech is evil. In fact, any unholy behaviour grieves the Holy Spirit.

Eph. 4:31bitterness,
wrath (passion),
anger,
wrangling,
slander or
maliceEph. 4:32kindness, tender-hearted,
forgiveness

these are all concerned with our reactions to other people. The way of the old nature is to react in the way it has been treated, but God's way is to react in kindness e.g., when He forgave us. Our new nature is created in the likeness of God, therefore, we should react as God does. The fullest expression of this was seen in Christ who walked in love; i.e., He gave Himself for us.

Eph. 5:3-4immorality,
impurity,
greed,
obscene,
silly and
vulgar
talkEph. 5:4b

thanksgiving

the things listed in the first column are the fruit of darkness, and such give evidence of the life that is sinful, and lost. It is these very things that precipitate the judgment of God on the unrepentant. As this is the case, it is inconceivable that Christians should permit such things in their lives. Rather, the Christian's life, a life of light, is to be the kind of life that will make clear, just how evil the other kind of living is. The emphasis is that we are to expose evil by the quality of our lives. Instead of 'obscene, silly and vulgar talk' there is to be only thanksgiving.

**PUT OFF****PUT ON****COMMENTS**

Eph. 5:6-18
foolishness (5:17)

Eph. 5:8-19
wisdom (5:15)

light is a symbol of knowledge as well as purity. The light we have from Christ does give us wisdom to live in an evil world in a way that will be effective for God. The plea for a life lived on the basis of understanding the will of God can be linked to 4:32 and also to Romans 12:2.

Eph. 5:18
drunkenness

Eph. 5:18-20
be filled with
the spirit.

The extent of the contrast is seen in the results. On the one hand, there is debauchery (5:18) or loss of control associated with wasteful and reckless living. On the other, there is a Spirit controlled life associated with praises that are felt in the heart, and a sense of such security in Christ that one is able to render thanks to Him in every situation: one brings a "joy" because there is a release from reality, the other "joy" that is based on the great reality of our salvation in Christ.

QUESTION 1:

Four specific charges are brought against the Gentiles in 4:18, 19. Restate them in your own words.

QUESTION 2:

One of the most difficult questions for anyone to answer adequately is, "what is truth?" Paul gives one answer in vv. 20, 21. What is the answer? How does it differ from our usual concept of truth?

QUESTION 3:

Paul applies his statement about truth to the question of behaviour by using the metaphor of garments which are "put off" and "put on" (vs22-24). How does the truth in Christ relate to the new nature? Discuss the process of putting on the new nature.

QUESTION 4:

What command does Paul give about the Christian's new life in 4:26, 27? What else is said about this subject in James 1:19, 20?

QUESTION 5:

Explain what command Paul gives in 4:29, 30 and how it can be applied now.



QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY:

Look at Paul's command about "work" in v28. What does it mean and how can it be applied today? What extra ideas are included in Colossians 3:22, 23 on this subject? How does that apply today, to you, personally?