



This week's focus is on application of God's blessings, calling, unity, and love. As followers of Jesus, our status has been changed. As those who are "in Christ," God has called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. This week includes the commands to "walk worthy" of God's calling and to "no longer walk as the Gentiles (unbelievers) do." This means a lot of change for us.

YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW

Has there been a time in your life when you needed to change your ways because of your association with something or someone?

For me, this happened when (1) I represented our high school at events, (2) I became a disciple of Jesus Christ, (3) I joined the Air Force, (4) I was in leadership in our family business (COO), and (5) I became a pastor at Trinity Church.

We all have had the need to change because of who we are. The biggest and most important for all of us is when we became a disciple of Jesus.

LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

The first three chapters of this letter laid a foundation of God's work to bless His people and bring about oneness, one new person out of the many backgrounds. In this chapter, Paul is unpacking what this means in our behavior. In short, because we are "in Christ" and in His family, we need to change our ways.

Here is my overview of the passage for this week:

Summary:

In order to walk in a manner worthy of your calling, you must . . .

- 1) Stop living like people who are without Christ in their lives (17-19)
 - a. That is your former conduct (way of life)
 - b. They are messed up in their thinking
 - i. Futile (def. serving no useful purpose: completely ineffective)
 - ii. darkened in their understanding
 - iii. separated from the life of God
 - iv. Hearts are hardened because they don't know God
 - c. They have lost sensitivity; They have given themselves over to sensuality (pursuing the gratification of their senses, preoccupied by their appetites)
 - i. They indulge in every kind of impurity
 - ii. They are full of greed
- 2) You were called to a new way of life in Christ (20 – 24)
 - a. This is the way of life that you learned of the truth that is in Jesus
 - b. You were taught to put off / get rid of your old person (self) which was being corrupted by deceitful lust [QUESTION: How is lust deceitful?]
 - c. And [instead] trust God to be made new in the spirit of our minds, the motivating force of our existence, to become the new person created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.
- 3) This new life in Christ should change how we think and act
 - a. By being truthful instead of false, as members of one body
 - b. By avoiding sinful anger that lingers and leaves you open to the devil

- c. By being a responsible worker rather than stealing so that you can share with those in need.
- d. By speaking what is beneficial and builds others up and rather than unwholesome talk
- e. Don't live in your former way of life (lying, angry, stealing, unwholesome talk) which grieves the Holy Spirit as it is unloving and breaks up the unity of the Body of Christ. For the Holy Spirit marked you as belonging to God.
- f. Change how you are in relationships
 - i. Get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and malice
 - ii. Instead, be kind, compassionate, forgiving as in Christ, God forgave you.

Read Ephesians 4:17-32 and consider these questions. (Note: It will enrich our time together if we have all studied the passage before we meet.)

Paul begins this passage with an emphatic exhortation: "You must no longer walk (live) as the Gentiles do." Why is that? What is wrong with the way they live? (17-19)

In the following verses, we will see much of why we cannot live like them. See vs. 18-19

Most important is what Paul wrote in v. 20: We are to walk in the way of Christ!

On what does Paul base this call to a new way to live? What is the model for how we are to live? Why this? (20-21)

Our behavior is to follow the way of Christ!

As a disciple, we are learners. We were and are being taught in Him. We are learning truth.

So, Jesus is our model and source of truth in how to live (walk).

According to verses 22-24, God is calling those who are in Christ to make a big shift in their lifestyle. What major changes are needed?

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life,

- to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires
- to be made new in the attitude of our minds
- and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Our shift is to have a total makeover. This means a putting off of our old self (old ways of darkness including corrupted and deceitful desires.)

Second, it means to allow God to renew "the spirit of our minds." This means, what causes us to think the way we think and then do what we do. Notice all the references to the thinking and minds of the gentiles (non-believers) from previous verses: "futility of their minds" (17), "darkened in their understanding" (18), "ignorance" (18).

Paul then lists both negative and positive ways that need to happen in our relationships. What are the specific ways?

- a. By being truthful instead of false, as members of one body
- b. By avoiding sinful anger that lingers and leaves you open to the devil
- c. By being a responsible worker rather than stealing so that you can share with those in need.
- d. By speaking what is beneficial and builds others up and rather than unwholesome talk
- e. Don't live in your former way of life (lying, angry, stealing, unwholesome talk) which grieves the Holy Spirit as it is unloving and breaks up the unity of the Body of Christ. For the Holy Spirit marked you as belonging to God.
- f. Change how you are in relationships
 - iii. Get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and malice
 - iv. Instead, be kind, compassionate, forgiving as in Christ, God forgave you.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

In the two central commands of this chapter, Paul wrote, “I urge you” and “I insist on it in the Lord” (4:1 and 4:17) which are about how we “walk” (live out) our life in Christ. These are about behavior, relationships and other changes that need to take place in our daily lives. Is this like the law of the Old Testament? How is this supposed to happen?

While we are not under the law of Moses, we are under a Lord and Master Teacher. Thus, our obedience is out of love (John 14:21) and because we want to know, love, and follow Jesus. This is a different way and mindset from following rules and laws to try to earn a place with God. Rather, we are His children who love Him and love to please Him.

The new standard of behavior is to be like Jesus Christ. What helps you become like Him in these ways? How can we best help each other to be the new person in Christ?

Sharing question. Please allow this to be an open discussion. I would expect this to take extra time.

Paul specifically lists our relational and ethical behavior. In light of the themes in the early chapters, why are these listed here?

God is building one new person, a unified family who love God and each other.

God has blessed us to bless others.

Which of the changes Paul listed is easier or more difficult for you to change?

Sharing question

APPLY IT THIS WEEK

This entire passage is aimed at becoming like Jesus in our minds, speech, and behavior. Most of us cannot change everything at once. Ask God if there is a specific application of Christ-like living that He would help you and God’s family.

PLEASE PRAY

- Please pray for our global partners including Youssef and Haley Jouni who are desiring to return to Lebanon as soon as they can complete raising support
- Please pray for our vision and mission to help people to follow Jesus as disciples
- Please pray for our small group shepherds as they serve as leaders in community life

This passage is challenging to all of us. While this means humility, sacrifice, and much change, it is also a privilege and blessing to represent Christ. I pray that you will know the joy of Jesus as you shepherd God’s children.

Steve