

New Life, Clean Break

Ephesians 4:17-24

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Introduction

Ephesians 4:17-24

17So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,

18being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

19and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

20But you did not learn Christ in this way,

21if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,

22that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,

23and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Our text further develops the theme Paul began in Ephesians 4:1-3:

1Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

2with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,

3being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Having explained how “walking worthy” displays itself within the body of Christ, Paul takes up how “walking worthy” contrasts with the common manner of life of those outside of Christ—the lifestyle believers practiced prior to their conversion.

Clearly, new life in Christ creates a clean break with the old lifestyle. However we interact with the culture of any time or place on earth, both in lifestyle choices and ministry strategy, we must do so in keeping with the instruction in passages like this one. Refusal or failure to do so raises the question as to whether we have Christ at all.

Apart from Christ new life is impossible. Apart from the new life in Christ, a clean break from the sinful behavior of the past is impossible. If there is no clean break, one may question whether we have new life. If there is no new life—we don't have Christ. Whatever we may profess to be promoting and practicing, it is not Christianity.

I. The Mandate for Counter-culture Living

17So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,

18being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

19and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

A. A Life of Intellectual Emptiness

17So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,

B. A Life of Spiritual Ignorance

18being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

C. A Life of Moral Corruption

19and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

II. The Source of New Life

20But you did not learn Christ in this way,

21if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,

A. The Way of Christ

20 But you did not learn (follow as a disciple) Christ in this way,

B. The Voice of Christ

21a if indeed you have heard Him

C. The Instruction of Christ

21b And have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus

III. The Process of Lifestyle Transformation

22that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,

23and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

A. Abandon Your Old Conduct.

(Or You have abandoned your old conduct.)

²²that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,

B. Be Renewing What Controls Your Thinking.

(Or What controls your thinking has been renewed.)

²³and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

C. Adopt a New Lifestyle.

(Or You have adopted a new lifestyle.)

²⁴and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Conclusion

1 Peter 2:9-12 speaks in similar terms of how God has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Such counter-culture living actually commends the gospel to a world lost in darkness. It calls for our conduct as citizens of the kingdoms of this world to be all the more honorable (13-17). Nonetheless, godly living often means suffering for us in an ungodly world (18-25). We go wrong if we ignore any of these principles of living in this world: we cannot accommodate the darkness, nor dare we adopt a lawless rebellion to the customs and authorities of our community, nor should we expect never to suffer for doing the right thing. Our new life in Christ makes us benefactors to our world and at the same time antagonists to the darkness of it. New Life, Clean Break.