

# Ephesians 4 vs 17-32

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] in their own city. So that's some of the background, and he's writing with great passion here. Somebody has said, as Carl was pointing out last night, this is one of the most sublime of all Paul's writings, for the simple reason that everything you need to know about what God has done for us in salvation, and everything you need to know about what the church is supposed to be like, and who we really are in Christ, it's all here. It's all unpackable from these pages of this letter to Ephesus. So here he is, chapter 4, verse 1. As a prisoner for the Lord, then I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle. Be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us, grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says, when he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people. Now what does he ascended mean, except that he also descended to the lower earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens in order to fill the whole universe. So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers to equip his people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves, blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work. And then into the section that we have for today. So I tell you this, says Paul, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that's in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they've given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity and they are full of greed. That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 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 your minds and to put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor. For we are all members of one body. In your anger, do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you're still angry and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work doing something useful with their own hands so that they may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

[ 4 : 12 ] Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ. God forgave you. God forgave you.

God forgave you. Okay. We're thinking about heaven's dress code today. Carl was talking to us last week about how we walk.

This week I want to talk about what we wear. What does it mean to be well turned out for God as a Christian? How should we look? What should be the clothing that marks us out as God's and not the world's?

Okay. So we're thinking about heaven's dress code here today. Paul is telling the saints that there are things they need to put off. Rags that don't belong in the life of the kingdom.

Clothes that are just not decent to be wearing. If you're a kingdom person. And there are clothes that you need to put on. And so we're going to be thinking about that today.

[ 5 : 39 ] He's telling us that we need to be people who speak the truth and who are in a process of getting ready. We're speaking the truth in the sense of not just what comes out of our mouths.

But what is visible in our lives. We're speaking the truth by lives that are based on truth. Lives that are truthful lives.

Lives where God is really seen as he really is. That's a truthful life. A life that doesn't misrepresent God in the world. It's a truthful life.

And there's also the fact that in all of this we're getting ready. You're going to be going to heaven.

Is there a tear in the house? You're going to be going to heaven. That's a beautiful thought. But how are you going to be dressed when you arrive there?

[ 6 : 37 ] Are you going to be ready for the occasion? You need to start wearing the right kind of dress now. Dress is somebody who's on their way. So that when we arrive we're not embarrassed to turn up in the wrong clothes.

Jesus told a parable about a man who turned up for a wedding banquet. And when the king came into the banquet to see all the guests. There was a man there who wasn't wearing the wedding clothes.

He wasn't dressed for the wedding. And the king said tie him up and throw him out. Now Jesus wasn't saying that you've got to wear the right clothes in order to earn your salvation.

He was actually saying if you're wearing the wrong clothes it's proof that you were never saved. Because if you're truly saved you will be wearing the right clothes when you arrive at the gates of heaven.

Your life will be the evidence that you were truly saved. Okay. So before we go any further here.

[ 7 : 41 ] I think it's time to recap on something. It's not actually on the page here for us. But in order to think ourselves into what Paul is saying to the Ephesian church.

We have to consider what really do we mean by salvation. And I think in many ways the church has lived for too long with a one dimensional view of salvation.

When in actual fact salvation comes in two parts. And neither can be done without. Here's the bit that we all know about. Salvation actually has two sides.

But there's one part that we all know about. And that's the shift from condemnation to justification. We all know about that part. That's the part in which God has done such a thing for us in Jesus.

Jesus has made such a perfect atonement. And paid the price of our sins. That he has literally moved us from the place of condemnation to the place of justification. We all know about that.

[ 8 : 37 ] So we've been secured for heaven. Judgment is passed according to John 5 24. Jesus said whoever believes my words and holds on to them has passed over from death to life.

And will not come under judgment. You've got the word of Jesus on that. If you are holding fast to Jesus' promises. You have already crossed over from death to life. And you will not face judgment.

Why? Because your judgment already happened at Calvary. The judgment was passed upon you at Calvary. And your sin was condemned in the person of Jesus.

He took the condemnation. Your judgment is passed. You don't have a judgment to face for your sin. There will be a judgment before the throne of Jesus. But it's a judgment for how we've lived.

It's a judgment about what rewards do we receive in our heavenly life to come. But it's not a judgment about salvation that we face if we're trusting Jesus. That's all done and dusted.

[ 9 : 37 ] That's finished. And it cost Jesus everything to give us that verdict. We're blood-bought children for the Father. If you go to Revelation 5 9 you'll find praise to the Lamb who was slain and who purchased men for God.

That's what we are. We're blood-bought children for the Father. So that's one side of salvation. That's the side where we've moved from condemnation to justification.

We're right with God. And God has done it all. But there's another side to salvation. And that's the move from worldliness to godliness. And that is so important for the church.

We need to understand that if we truly are a saved people, we will make that transition from worldliness to godliness. And this is what Paul is speaking about in the letter to the Ephesians this morning.

Because you see, if we don't make the move from worldliness to godliness, we have a tainted witness on earth. People need to be able to see in our lives that we have cast off the old worldly ways, the old worldly attitudes, the old worldly habits, and passions and preoccupations, and that we've embraced a completely new way of living that brings honor and glory to God.

[ 11 : 00 ] And his glory and the hallowing of his name is the big priority that we have. So that in all our dealings with people, we're seeking to bring honor and glory to God and not to bring disrespect upon his name.

The witness on earth is expected because according to Paul in 2 Corinthians, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

So we're talking about something very, very radical here. When you become a Christian, you are not the same person anymore. God has done something in your heart that's changed you on the inside.

And what Paul is saying is if you're going to look by faith and not by sight, you have to believe that you're a different person on the inside. You really have to believe that, that God has actually changed you on the inside, given you a new heart, a new spirit, a new desire for righteousness and for holiness.

So you need to learn to listen to who you are, really, that God has made you. And this transition from worldliness to godliness is also about getting ready for heaven.

[ 12 : 12 ] It's about those wedding clothes I was talking about a minute ago. Are we going to turn up at the wedding feast of the Lamb properly dressed for the occasion? Or are we going to turn up looking like, well, basically we need a makeover?

Huh? Huh? So let's remember this. Salvation has two sides to it. And we cannot honestly be confident about our salvation unless it's got both sides.

Because if we have been moved from condemnation to justification, there must be evidence of that. That's why James says, don't talk to me about your faith unless there are some works alongside to give evidence of that faith.

There must be evidence of your saving faith. You must have a life that looks as if you've been saved. Okay. So salvation is in two parts.

And here are what the two parts are. The first part, condemnation to justification, is about Jesus as Savior. And the second part, the move from worldliness to godliness, is about Jesus as Lord.

[ 13 : 25 ] Now we're all happy with Jesus being Savior because that doesn't cost us anything. But to make the transition from worldliness to godliness is to bow before him and acknowledge him as Lord and let him be the highest honor in your life.

The first part of salvation is his work. And nobody can add to it, nobody can take away from it. It's all his work.

He does the saving. And we're secure because of him. The second part is about our walk. And that's also part of our salvation. Our salvation is incomplete unless we're concerned about our walk.

So we should be people who once we've been saved want to live a saved life. Okay. The life of those who've been rescued.

Paul here, turning to our passage now, at verse 17, is insistent. He's being insistent here. He's actually digging his heels in and he's saying to these Ephesians, whom he founded and whom he taught for three years, he's saying, I'm insisting on this now.

[ 14 : 37 ] You must no longer live as the Gentiles do. So it looks as though he's realized he's got some work to do with these Ephesian Christians because for all the teaching that they've had, there's still a hangover from the old life.

There's still rubbish. There's still garbage in their lives that doesn't belong. It doesn't look like the kingdom of God. It doesn't bring any glory to God and it doesn't bring any benefit to them.

And it mars their testimony to the surrounding culture. Look at what, here's a view of what the sinner looks like.

I tell you this, I insist on it in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do in the futility of their thinking. They're darkened in their understanding, separated from the life of God, ignorant, hard-hearted.

They've lost all sensitivity. They've given themselves over to sensuality to indulge in every kind of impurity and they're full of greed. Now that sounds a bit extreme, doesn't it?

[ 15 : 43 ] Is that, is that kind of extreme way of describing a non-Christian, a sinner? Is it? Because you see, we need to ask, is that Paul's view or is that God's view?

If you believe, as I do, that this is the word of the Lord rather than the word of Paul, then this is God's view of what it is to be a sinner. This is God's view of what it means to need rescuing from the way that the culture normally lives.

You know, Hebrews 12, 1 says you need to, we need to throw off the sin that clings so closely. And Joshua had to speak to his people at the end of his life, after the invasion of Canaan, after they've all settled in their lands and they've got their inheritance.

Joshua, at the end of his life, is having to speak to his people and he says to them, now put away the gods that your fathers worshipped in the land beyond the river. what is he referring to?

He's referring to at least 400 years before when Abraham and had, before Abraham had left Babylon, when they all worshipped the gods of Babylon beyond the river, the river Euphrates.

[ 17 : 11 ] Put away those old gods, he says. And here they are for centuries. They've been lugging around these discredited old gods that never ever saved them in a battle. That never ever provided them with food.

That never ever gave them clothing. That never brought water from the rock. That never parted the Red Sea. Old discredited gods that their fathers worshipped in ignorance.

And they're still lugging them about in their carpet bags. Centuries later. You see how sin clings so closely. You can, you can still call yourself one of God's people and be walking about with all sorts of stuff still clinging to your life that doesn't belong there.

What do we watch on TV? What do we do with our spare time? How do we dress? Do we dress respectably? Do we dress modestly?

How do we engage in conversation with other people? Do we laugh at all the blue jokes that go around at a funeral tea or something like that? What do we do? How do we represent God in the way that we live?

[ 18 : 21 ] So I want to say to you this dire view of sinners here that looks so extreme is not Paul's view of things it's God's. It's how God sees us before he gets to work in our lives and sends Jesus to save us.

Sin has bottomless possibilities. We all need to come to terms with that. We need the realism to see that sin has bottomless possibilities.

If you don't believe that ask yourself how it was possible under the Nazis for the population of Germany most of whom were just decent law abiding people who loved their kids and their grandkids and lived normal lives like you and I did.

How was it possible for them all to stand back and allow 6 million people to be murdered by their government? Because they were all complicit in that.

They turned out at the Nuremberg rallies and they cheered and cheered and cheered for this man who was breathing nothing but wickedness and hatred from the microphone. If you don't believe that sin has bottomless possibilities you need to study history a bit more closely.

[ 19 : 31 ] These people had a futile mentality they had an understanding deficit they were ignorant they were hard hearted they were desensitized to sin they didn't even realize that sin was sin and what's happening in our society today we're being taught to believe by our government even that sin is now a virtue that filth is now clean and so people get desensitized and they don't believe anymore that sin is a sin or that uncleanness is uncleanness they were dominated these Gentiles that Paul is thinking about they were dominated why do I know how do I know they were dominated because Jesus rescued us from the dominion of Satan and brought us into the kingdom and Satan's rule is a dominion he dominates those who are under his control and if you don't understand that non-Christians are dominated by Satan then you don't understand how urgently they need to be rescued we had about 40 people in here yesterday the bulk of whom do not know the Lord and need salvation and they don't realize that they're not free to make up their minds about things they're not free to think they're dominated by Satan who actually controls their thought processes that's why sin has bottomless possibilities and people are surrendered to their appetites so we're actually saying here

Paul is saying here that our clothes will make us you know the old saying clothes make the man yeah we're not talking about power dressing here but we're talking about praise dressing we're talking about the kind of way of living and being clothed with righteousness and holiness that brings honor and glory to God we pray hallowed be thy name and we live hallowed be thy name so it's makeover time okay we're going to go to the wardrobe and see what's there and so what Paul is actually saying to us is be who you are not who you were be who you are not who you were do you remember we sang that song just a wee while ago we walk by faith and not by sight if God has made you a new person on the inside you need to learn how to be that new person and not just be the old person kind of patched up and made do

God doesn't do making men he doesn't do patch up and make do he doesn't do recycling he does new from the ground up he does complete recreation we'll see that in a minute you see the choice is to and this is what's this was the choice for the Ephesians you either clothe yourself with Christ or by default you will clothe yourself with culture there's nothing in between in order to clothe yourself with Christ you have to actually make deliberate choices you have to say I'm not going to look like that today I'm not going to wear that frown today I'm not going to react like that to that nasty person today you're making deliberate daily choices to wear different clothing that represents your saviour so you clothe yourself with Christ and you do it as a matter of deliberation you do it as a matter of choice and you do it as a matter of daily discipline and it's a daily thing

Jesus himself warned it would be whoever follows me must take up his cross daily what does it mean to take up your cross it doesn't mean to you know we all talk about crosses we've got to bear and really they're not crosses at all they're just the kinds of sufferings that everybody has in common with everybody else the cross that we're supposed to take up is the death of our self-will that's what Jesus means when he says take up your cross daily and follow after me put your self-will to death and let the will of Jesus come to the front and take control clothe yourself with Christ or you will clothe yourself with culture by default it'll happen anyway one way or another so you either make a deliberate decision daily and in moment-by-moment situations to clothe yourself with crowds or your culture will come to the front and that will be what clothes you and those cultural clothes hang so naturally on us don't they they just hang so naturally on us we don't have to try to be cultural but we do have to make the effort and take the discipline to be

Christ-like so you start with your mind that's that's where the battle really starts salvation always begins with your mind Paul said to the Romans in Romans 12 do not be conformed to this world's way of thinking but be transformed by the renewing of your mind then you will be able to test what is the will of God his good and perfect and acceptable will don't be conformed to the world's way of thinking J.B.

[ 25 : 14 ] Phillips says don't allow the world around to press you into its mold you see something deliberate is going on here something determined you're not going to allow yourself to be clothed with culture you start with your mind and you say I'm going to give my mind to the Lord today so you cleanse your thinking how do you cleanse your thinking brothers and sisters that is the simplest thing of all because we have the word of God this is the word that washes us this is the word that cleans us and if we're cycling this through our lives day in and day out you know if you're not reading the Bible the whole Bible once a year you're missing out read the Bible once a year if you don't know how to do that come and talk to me afterwards I'll help you get set up with it it's not a big problem and you don't need to be an academic and you're not heading for a PhD God just wants to be understood you know when

Tyndale was translating the Bible from the Hebrew and the Greek into English and he was hated by the powers the political powers in the church he was hated for trying to make the Bible accessible to the common man there was a bishop a Roman Catholic bishop who had a real go at Tyndale over a dinner at one point and he and he castigated him for this evil thing that he was doing interfering with the holiness of the scriptures and all this kind of thing and Tyndale says by the time I'm finished he said the plow boy will know more of God's word than you do you see brothers and sisters your Bible was produced for plow boys it wasn't produced for guys like me who've had a university education it was produced for plow boys every one of us is supposed to be able to understand it William Tyndale was was garrotted he was throttled at the stake and then burned in Belgium because he had translated the Bible into your language so plow boys could understand please don't allow some kind of stupid academic mythology to fool you into thinking that this

Bible is only for folks who are brainy this Bible was produced for plow boys two-thirds of our New Testament right now is exactly as Tyndale wrote it and everything else in the Bible borrows from him you've got tens of thousands of little phrases in your everyday speech that come straight from Tyndale's English Bible and we don't know that we're using them so brothers and sisters please get into the word of God cycle it through your life day in and day out because it's how you cleanse your mind from the traditional and default cultural ways of thinking chapters 1 to 3 of Ephesians are not the appetizer they're the main course if you've struggled with chapters 1 to 3 then please don't think they're just the appetizer let's get to the main course here at chapter 4 and 5 and 6 no you need to understand because Paul

Paul set out his theology in the first three chapters why because he knew that unless he changed the way that people thought he could not change the way they live if you don't change the way you think you will not change the way you live it's that simple chapters 1 to 3 will tell you who you are they'll tell you where you are and they'll tell you what you are and you'll discover that you're actually citizens of heaven on the earth and once you begin to really believe that you are a citizen of heaven on earth that changes everything because you can no longer live on earth just as you've always done you're now a representative of heaven on the earth that's a big task isn't it a big challenge but not an impossible one because it's God's call upon you and God doesn't command the impossible God only commands what he makes possible every command of God comes with the power of God to obey there's nothing unreasonable about

God he never commands what you can't do so the clothes make us we need to decide what we're going to put on and what we're going to take off don't know how we managed to get to that one there we are let's look at verse 23 verse 23 is almost a throwaway line but it's staggering in its implications at verse 22 Paul says 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 your minds and to put on the new self created to be like God we're running into verse 24 here and to put on the new self created to be like God I'm just going to stop there created to be like God what does that make you think about created to be like God where does that take your mind back to could it perhaps be

[ 30 : 52 ] Genesis 2 let us make man in our image in our likeness so God created man in his own image in the likeness of God he created him what's Paul saying here you were taught with regard to your former way of life to put off your old self so that's what the stuff you get out of your wardrobe you chuck that that goes to the skip right 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 your minds and to put on the new self and the new self is what the new self is created to be like God in true righteousness and it means true holiness true holiness that's something that would have a registration for Paul because he understood false holiness as a Pharisee he had lived a false holiness his holiness his understanding of holiness was that it was all about his own personal advancement it was all about his own track record it was all about his own performance as a as a mighty man of righteousness but in actual fact it was all false because holiness isn't about how we represent ourselves to God holiness is how we represent God on earth is God visible in you is

God visible in me can people look at us can they meet us can they shake our hands without some understanding that God is present so how are we going to be well turned out for God this is we finish with these verses Paul says that we need to learn to love the truth to speak the truth and to live the truth like Daniel in Babylon you remember here was here was Daniel it should not have been possible Daniel was a captive from an alien nation he was not a Babylonian he was a Hebrew and yet successive kings of Babylon from Nebuchadnezzar right through to Darius those successive kings when they wanted somebody completely and utterly trustworthy at their right hand they didn't go for another

Babylonian they looked for Daniel Daniel was the man of choice why because he was a man of absolute integrity and he wouldn't tell them lies he wouldn't tell them what they wanted to hear he wasn't a he wasn't a yes man he would tell them what they needed to hear that was Daniel in Babylon so Paul says you need to learn how to express anger without sin it's not wrong to be angry there are things that you need to get angry about or there's something wrong with you but don't give the devil a foothold don't go to bed angry at night fizzling and fussing in your in your spirit because all you're doing is provide an opportunity for the devil to get in and wind it up and the devil never passes up an opportunity that we give him you need to do honest hard work instead of being a thief he's talking to Christians here he's talking to people many of whom already heard his teaching when he was in Ephesus and he's having to say to these

Christians hey you shouldn't be stealing you know you work hard and have an honest life with your hands and that's going to bring glory to God if you're a thief what are people going to think about your God he says your conversation get rid of all this filthy talk from your mouth don't talk like the people round about you don't laugh at their jokes but have your conversation full of grace and seasoned with salt so that your words actually build people up and you don't use your mouth to to say bad things about other people or to spread gossip or to tell lies or to exaggerate exaggeration is a form of lying and he says don't grieve the Holy Spirit don't bring sadness to God who is within you you see we don't realize it we're sit watching the TV and there's four pairs of eyes watching that TV yours and the Lord's because he's within you what are you watching on the TV does the

Holy Spirit want to share that hour with you or does he just sit there in sadness and when are they going to see that he shouldn't be watching this when are they going to see that this isn't the right kind of material for somebody who's preparing for heaven when are they going to make better choices don't grieve the Holy Spirit you are inhabited by the living God through the Holy Spirit don't grieve the Holy Spirit with whom you were sealed against the day of redemption so you see at the end of it the root of it all Paul comes to this lovely conclusion here he says be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you so he's saying to these Ephesians and he's saying to you and me forgiveness is the bedrock we wouldn't be



[ 37 : 04 ] Christians if it wasn't for God's forgiveness forgiveness and if forgiveness is the bedrock of our lives forgiveness must also be the chief characteristic of the way that we relate to each other I once had I once had to to pastor a church where a couple of people had not spoken to each other in 25 years but they took communion every Sunday and one day I couldn't stand it any longer and I had to preach about from 1 Corinthians 11 that if you eat and drink unworthily not recognizing the body and blood of the Lord you eat and drink judgment upon yourself that is why many of you are sick and some have died and that just about caused World War Three in the church but the fact of the matter was I couldn't let it go any longer there were these people sitting there eating drinking judgment on themselves misusing communion because they thought it was a way of impressing God that they never missed communion

God was waiting for them to forgive each other as he had forgiven them so forgiveness is the bedrock so that's how you get well turned out for God brothers and sisters we recognize that our salvation is in two parts there's his work and there's our walk that's our salvation it's in two parts his work it's finished it's done it's paid for and we can't add to it we can't take away from it and we're utterly secure because of his work but there's our walk if we're truly saved we must be well turned out for God visit the wardrobe today and let's start deciding what we're going to keep and what we're going to throw out what we're going to put on that brings honour and glory to our Lord and Saviour in Jesus name Amen