

Ephesians 4:17-32

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Preacher: David Moser

[0 : 00] Lord, we would pray for you today. I pray that you would humble us, that you would instruct us, that you would encourage us, that we would be open and receptive for this thing in Christ's name and for his sake.

Amen. Leo Tolstoy is best known for his epic War and Peace. He also wrote many short stories. One was titled The Blind Man and the Milk. And he wrote, A man born blind asked a seeing man, What color is milk? The seeing man said, The color of milk is the same as that of white paper. The blind man asked, Well, does that color rustle in your hands like paper? The seeing man said, No, it is as white as flour. The blind man asked, Well, is it as soft and as powdery as flour? The seeing man said, No, it's simply as white as a white rabbit. The blind man asked, Well, is it as fluffy and soft as a rabbit? The seeing man said, No, it is as white as snow.

[1 : 25] The blind man asked, Well, is it as cold as snow? And no matter how many examples the seeing man gave, The blind man was unable to understand What the white color of milk was like.

There isn't a description in the world That can tell a blind person What the color of milk is like. He needs eyes to see it. He needs the categories in his mind To see color.

And last week we saw how A change in our heart Gentleness, humility, patience Changes our whole lives. And this week we're going to see Like the blind man That changes in our mind The way we perceive the world Also changes our whole lives.

You see, our new life in Christ Changes the way we think In our minds. It changes then, therefore The way we act. And that's actually how this Passage is broken down.

Verses 17 to 24 Are all about how we think. And then verses 25 to 32 Explore that renewed mind And how it changes our whole life. So Paul begins in verse 17 Saying, Now this I say And testify in the Lord That you must no longer walk As the Gentiles do In the futility of their minds.

[2 : 45] They are darkened in their understanding Alienated from the life of God Because of the ignorance that is in them Due to the hardness of their heart They have become callous And have given themselves up To sensuality, greed To practice every kind of impurity.

Now Paul begins saying You must no longer walk As the Gentiles do. That should remind us Back to chapter 2. That's what it looks like Here, today To walk in darkness As we walked in death At the beginning of chapter 2.

What influences our thinking? Verse 19 says The ignorance that is in unbelievers Due to the hardness of our heart And that's why Paul started Last week with heart change.

If we have our hearts Set on something Our minds will follow there And it won't Our minds won't go Somewhere else. If our hearts haven't been Strapped into a rocket ship And pointed to Christ Our minds aren't going to go there either.

How do we start thinking In the wrong way? I think that's an important question. Verse 18 shows us That we were simultaneously At fault And victims. We were victims of our own ignorance.

[4 : 07] But we're also the authors Of that ignorance Due to the hardness of our hearts. This is kind of a lot Like an eating disorder In a way. If you're Starving yourself You probably Idolize skinniness.

But you also probably Have a perception problem About your own body. And that's not helped By a starved brain. When your brain Is starving for oxygen Or food Or water Or sleep It doesn't work right.

And so you actually Have a self-fulfilling Deepening cycle. It's the same way That our mind Doesn't work right When it's starved Of God Of its maker.

Walking in darkness Is a very similar cycle. People are alienated Paul says here From the life of God And having darkened understanding Because of the hardness of heart. And they won't They can't Get connected To the life of God In that state.

People starve themselves Of God And continue Doing so Precisely because They're separated from God. And how does that Affect our lives?

[5 : 18] Verse 19 Says they have Given themselves up To impurity. Now that is a Hopeless phrase. Is it not? Ultimately In the New Testament This word They give themselves up Is used When people Surrender themselves To a jailer To be imprisoned.

Like that That is How hopeless This phrase is. Because if we don't Have the hope Of Christ Risen from the dead Christ in us Christ interceding for us Christ For us We have no reason Not to give ourselves up To the things of this world.

And that's Actually exactly The mindset Paul describes In his first letter To the Corinthians. He said If the dead Are not raised That is If we don't have Hope in Christ Let us eat And drink For tomorrow We Die.

That is the Ultimate Expression Of hopelessness. And of course You're going to Give yourself up To all sorts of things.

When we don't have The life Of God In Christ We're trying to Manufacture it Everywhere else. Trying to Manufacture life And hope And these substitutes Look like Every kind Of impurity.

[6 : 46] And so The solution To that That futile Thinking That Paul says Here in verse 17 Let's remind us Of something.

Back in chapter 1 Verse 18 He prayed That the eyes Of our hearts Might be Enlightened That we may Know What is the hope To which he has Called us. And that is the Anticode To futile thinking. Hopeless thinking. There is only One way out of it And that is Hope In Christ. Seems Very relevant To people Whose minds Are darkened Because they have No hope.

So Christians Our thoughts Should not be Mired In hopelessness Because we have Hope In God In Jesus Let us eat And drink For tomorrow We die Has turned Into Let us pursue God And live like him Because we will Live with him Forever And it is only That change of mind That will change Our lives A cure for Futile Worldly Hopeless Thinking That results In immorality Is only fixed By a mind Riveted On the hope Of our Call of Christ If you are Separated from The life of God Paul kind of Explores where That goes here Verse 19 Tells us Two things Happen You get Calloused So you don't Feel the Hopelessness And you try To manufacture Hope And life Everywhere else And what's

Worse Is that most People don't Even know Before you Came to Christ You probably Didn't know You needed him You didn't even Recognize that You were hopeless Hopeless And hopeless And not even Knowing it Is all the More Hopeless And that's Why we're Here That's why We're in This living Room That's why We're working Our tables Off week By week With budgets And children's Ministry policy And location Committees That's why We're planning A church In eastern Connecticut A quarter Of a million People live In New London County And nearly All of them Are alienated From the life Of God Almost none Of them Have a hope Of God's Calling And have Hopelessly Given themselves Up To things That do not Last And do not Satisfy And continue To separate Themselves Further And further From the life Of God Nearly all Of them Are callous And darkened

[9 : 24] In their thinking Because of the Hardness of their hearts They're completely Unable to see The truth And beauty Of the gospel The only hope There is Nearly all Of them Are hopeless And don't Know it What's that We should be Heartbroken That there That there are So many Who are separated Alienated From the life Of God In Paul's phrase Yeah That's why Paul wants us To focus On the hope We have In the life Of God Both today We have that Hope for today And for the Age of God If you're Not a Christian I want you To recognize What the Bible is Saying I hope You're Recognizing That you Are alienated In the life Of God And I hope That you're Starting to Want it I hope You want To escape Hopelessness And futility And if that's

Going on In you Right now Then God Is starting To soften You According to This passage Your heart Heart Now we saw In chapter 2 That this Hardness of heart Is terminal We are Dead In trespasses And sin Your heart Is so hard You don't even Notice Especially If you don't Notice It doesn't Beat it all In the Spiritual sense In the Things of God It might As well Be a Heart Of stone Here's God's Promise Chapter 2 Also said That God Made us Alive With Christ And he Can make You Alive In Christ Here's The promise He gave Us in The Old Testament In Ezekiel Chapter 11 He said I will Give them One heart And a New spirit I will Put Within Them And I Will Remove The heart Of stone From them And give Them a Heart Of flesh That they May walk In my Statutes And keep My Rules And obey Them And they Should be My people And I Will be Their God You don't Need

To be Separated From Your God He will Change Your heart And change Your mind And in so Doing change Your life If you Will turn From yourself Turn To his Head Let's all Your hope Trust And love In Jesus Christ And here's Where that Hope takes Us It doesn't Just cure Our hopelessness And put Us in Neutral It takes Us somewhere Else For every Christian There is Now compassion For those Who don't Have the Hope And don't Have the Life And since We have That hope We don't Have to Give ourselves Up Any longer To impurity Instead Verse 20 That is Not The way You Learned Christ Assuming That you Have Heard About Him And were Taught Him As the Truth In Jesus To put Off Your old Self Which belongs To your Former Manner Of Life And is Corrupt Through deceitful Desires And to be Renewed in the Spirit of Your mind And to put On the new Self Created After the Likeness Of God In true Righteousness And holiness The blind man In Tolstoy's Story Suddenly Has eyes He can see The color Of milk And now He has A mind That understands The category Of color Similarly We have Our eyes Open To see The hope We have In God And no Longer Feel like We need To give Ourselves Up To substitutes And this Causes us To notice Two things First The new Life In Christ Is a Partnership Between us And God Put off Your old Self That's a Command to You Be renewed In the Spirit of Your mind He doesn't Say renew Your mind He says Be renewed In the Spirit of Your mind That's Something God Does in Us And again Put on The new Self That's A command To you Of course It's not like We don't Participate In the renewal Of our mind We read The Bible We sing Deep Wonderful Rich Songs We Encourage Each Other And God's Not absent From our Efforts To put Off The old We put Off The new It's a Purge Through And through But this Is the Kind of The how To This is What we Are to Do In the Christian Life And this Will lead To more And deeper Fellowship With God And I hope That's where You want The second Thing we see In verse 20 to 24 Is that It leads us To recognize That it's not Enough Just to put Off the old I think That's so Often where We land In the Christian life It's just Don't screw Up It's just Don't Sin And there's No Put on The new It's all Put off The old But there's Actually Really important Reasons Why we Have to Put on The new We take Off the old And don't Put on The new The old Is going To rush Right back In In fact We need To put On the new Or we won't Actually honor God Verse 24 Put on The new Self Created After the Likeness Of God In true Righteousness And holiness That's where He's glorified

[14:32] We need to Put on The new Or we won't Be a good Witness You know And holiness You don't Complain about Your husband As much Anymore Has he Changed No He's still Awful But let Let me Tell you About how God's Changed The way I think About it The new Man is A great Witness And we Need to Put on The new Because What's Good For us God is For us And he Wants What is Good Verse 25 Says Therefore Having put Away falsehood Let each One Of you Speak The truth With his Neighbor For we Are members Of one Another And so Paul is Introducing a New section Where he's Going to Take the How to That we Just Discussed Put off the Old And he's Going to Apply it To real Life Situations Verse 26 Be angry And do Not Sin Do not Let the Son go Down On your Anger And give No

Opportunity To the Devil Let the Thief No Longer Steal But rather Let him Labor Doing Honest Work With his Own Hands So that He may Have Something To share With anyone In need Let no Corrupting Talk Come out Of your Mounds But only Such Is good For building Up As it Fits The Occasion That it May Give Grace To those Who Hear You see There in Verse 25 That Paul Links Are thinking To our Life Put away Falsehood Suddenly We can Speak Truth Darkened And futile Thinking For those Of us Who have No hope No access To the Life Of God Because Of the Hardness Of our Hearts After We put Away Our Falsehood We're Freed To the Truth What does Our life Look like Think Right Well First If you Notice All of These Are Relational Qualities You Can't Be Angry Except At Someone You Can't Steal Except

From Someone You Can't Tear Down With Your Speech Unless You're Speaking To Someone So This Is A Very Public Thing Remember Verses 22 To 24 Is Basically A How To It's Put Off Old Be Renewed Put Undo And Here Verses 25 To 32 Are Three Very Practical Examples Anger Stealing And Corrupt Thought So We'll Look at Each Of Them In Turn And Each One Of Them Gets Three Steps But In In The Interest Of Time I'm Going To Apply The First Step To The First Example The Second Step To The Second Example The Third Step To The Third Example Just So That We Can Get Breath And Death At The Same Time So Let's Look at Anger Let's Look at The Old Man When You're When You see Someone Angry Not Not Yourself But When You see Someone It's Probably Childish How Immature How Self-Centered How Rude Right That's What's Going On In Our Own Heads When We See That Christian Or Not Everyone Pretty Well Recognizes That Angry

Outbursts Are Completely Opposed They're Like The Total Opposite Of Good Thinking They're What Happened When You Stop Them Why Is That Angry At Its Core It's An Antithesis It's A Complete Focus On Yourself What You Perceive To Be Your Rights And Your Prerogatives And Your Desires And A Corresponding Complete Inability To Actually See Yourself What You're Actually Doing In That Moment Your Skewed Perspective Your Juvenile Behavior And It's Even Worse For Christians When Christians Have Outbursts

It's Even More Childish Than When Someone Who Isn't A Christian Has An Outburst One Counselor Put It Like This There Are Many Ways To Describe Sin It Is Disobedience It's Missing The Mark Hatred Treason Spiritual Adultery Self Centeredness The List Can Go On Among These Descriptions Is That Sin Is Madness Or Insanity It's Irrational Delusional Unreasonable Because It Makes Absolutely No Sense In Light Of God's Love Towards Us When Anger Consumes A Christian Not Only Are We Unable To See Ourselves Well We're Unable To See God Well It's Like Being The Wealthiest Person On The Planet And Getting Really Upset About Losing A Five Dollar Bet

[19 : 37] Why Why Would You You Wouldn't Miss A Thousand Tens Of Thousands Of Those Five Dollar Bills Why Are You Focused On Something So Small And Same With Us If We Don't Get Our Way If Someone Insults Us If We Don't Get The Attention We Deserve If Things Don't Go Right For Us And We Whip Our Spots Up Into A Frenzy Over That A Frenzy We're Even Bigger Fools Than That Rich Man Our Treasure God In Us And For Us Is Greater Than The Wealthiest King In History Yet We're Losing It Over Trivial Things Like Traffic In Sports And Even Waiter Things Like Insults And Circumstances That Are Really Difficult But They Still Can't Touch Our Insane Wealth In Christ Who Died For Us Put Off The Man

Give No Opportunity For The Devil It Says! I Think That's Really Really Helping For Us Because Sometimes We Think If We Can Bottle Up Our Anger And Just Like Present A Calm Face And We Don't Have The We Are Hiding Ourselves From God We Can't See And So It's Sealing It Up Makes You No More Holy Than Sealing Up A Dirty Diaper It Still Stinks It's Just Hidden By Dwelling On Your Anger That Is Letting The Sun Set On It That's That's His Phrase Here It Will Consume You Day After Day And You're Going To Weaken The Armor The Army That We'll See In Chapter Six You're Going To Keep Weakening The Devil Would Like Nothing More Than To See You Separate Your Thoughts From God And Anger Does That It Just Doesn't He Would Give Anything To Distract You With Your Anger So That All Of The Blessings Here Just Aren't Effective In Your Life They Stay On The Bookshelf Pen Up Anger Is So Much Worse Because It Keeps Your Eyes Off The Word That Is Why Paul Is Concerned!

We Don't Let That Do You See How The Old Man Of Anger Has So Much To Do With Our Minds It Has So To Do With What We're Thinking About Where We Place Our Focus God God! God To! To! to put off the old, the next thing is to be transformed in our minds. And we'll take a look at that within the context of let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor doing honest work with his own hands so that he might have something to share with anyone in need.

[23 : 16] God wants to transform how we think about our possessions and our work. They aren't just for our benefit. But that's our default belief, isn't it? That's what we think.

In fact, it might not even be first or second for our benefit. Not just only, but it might not be first for our benefit. God isn't just a God who avoids stealing. He doesn't just not sin. He creates. He works. He gives. And that's what he's trying to work in us. That's the transformation he's trying to change. He's not just saying, don't steal. He's saying, I want you to view your possessions, your work, the things you do, the things you have in a completely different light. I want you to turn from yourself. I want you to turn towards others. And that's very reflective of who he is. And that's why in verse 24 he said that we're created, this new man, it's created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. We're being transformed into the image of Jesus. We're going to think like him. We're going to think about the way we work.

We're going to think about the way we hold on to our possessions the same way he does. I don't think I need to tell you about his generosity and the way he thinks. There's something to give, not something to take.

Finally, put on the new man. Verse 29, Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as as good for building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear. We put off the old man of corrupting talk. If we allow God to transform our mindset about how we use our words, those step one, step two, we move from tearing down to giving grace.

[25 : 20] We'll end up with new man speech. Speak in such a way that we build others up in ways that fit the situation. And that's wisdom.

Fit the situation. New man has the mind of Christ. And there's a weird phrase in here. Verse 30, Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

It's a strange phrase. And lots of people have lots of interesting ideas about what it means. I don't think it's actually that hard for us to figure it out. What is this whole passage about?

It's about putting off the old, putting on the new, because God is transforming our minds. And we've already said that it's a partnership. That we are involved and God is involved in each part of that. To the point where the commands here are go back and forth between us and God's action. Put off the old. Be transformed.

[26 : 22] Put on the new. And so, everything that we're talking about here is a partnership between us and God in growing to look like Him. Especially in our minds.

The way we think. And so, grieving the Holy Spirit is not paying attention to that work. It's not participating with Him in the work of holiness in our own lives.

In fact, this verse comes in a sandwich between two sections here of putting on holiness. What we just looked at, 24 to 29, that's all about working to put on the new self.

And the same thing with the verses that follow, 31 and 32. It's sandwiched in here. And so, the partnership is what he's getting at here. When he talks about grieving this here.

Now, there's a really interesting thing here. It's not just pursuing the old man that we're supposed to put on. It's also pursuing the new man that we're supposed to put on. That is to say, there is no middle ground.

[27 : 30] Either you are putting on the new man, or you are grieving the Spirit. Because there's just, there's no neutral. There's no middle ground. John Owen, the very famous Puritan, what said, be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.

If we aren't on offense, we are losing ground. That is the point. Verse 31 says, let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. Paul concludes his passage saying, as God in Christ forgave you.

one last time, he wants to root our obedience in God's love and in his power. He isn't just saying, like, God forgave you, now be forgiving you in grace.

Right? That's not what he's getting at. Certainly, we should forgive because we have been forgiven. Jesus tells a parable about the ungrateful servant who's forgiven much and then won't forgive a little day.

[28 : 39] But Paul's trying not to guilt us into obedience here, not to guilt us into forgiveness and other godly behavior. What he's trying to do, the whole message has been, up to this point, an encouragement.

But chapters 1-3 were all about, oh my goodness, do you understand what Christ has done for you and who you are in him? It's been here to warm our hearts so that we're not calloused, so that our hearts aren't hard, to bring to light the beauty of the gospel so our thinking isn't darkened in futility.

And so when we see this passage, we should say, oh, that is an encouragement to us. And he says, God in Christ forgave you, he's saying, remember, you have a hope for a glorious future.

And the foundation of wrong thinking of the old man is hopelessness. You have a hope for a glorious future because God forgave you.

You have an infinite inheritance in Jesus because God forgave you. You have God powerfully at work in your inner man because God forgave you.

[29 : 52] As God in Christ forgave you, that phrase, it reframes our thinking, the whole point of this passage. And that's why he concludes, it reshapes our perception and it reminds us of the hope of our heart.

So we no longer think like people without hope. So we no longer walk like people without hope.

Father, thank you for raising us with Christ.

Thank you for seating us with him in victory. thank you for giving us unbelievable hope. Take our eyes, we pray, fix them on Christ.

Take our minds, we pray, renew them in Christ. Lord, let's be a people of hope. Let's live like people of hope. We ask this in the name of Jesus who gave us hope.

I don't want it. Anna. Okay. Stand together, welcome.