

Ephesians 4:17-24 – Spiritual Renewal

A. Introduction

- The first half of Ephesians is a breathtaking description of our glorious salvation (Ephesians 1-3). Paul now moves on to the practical outworking of this salvation (Ephesians 4-6).
- Our faith must cover every area of our lives – in the church unity (4:1-16), in the world purity (4:17-5:21), in the home harmony (5:21-6:4), in the workplace integrity (6:5-9) and in spiritual warfare victory (6:10-20).
- In Ephesians 4:17-5:21 Paul instructs the Christians in Ephesus how they should live in a pagan world. He begins with some general principles (4:17-24) and then applies it in very practical areas such as truth, anger and purity (4:25-5:21). They must live holy lives.

B. Remember what you were saved from (4:17-19)

- Many of them were saved from paganism – he advises very strongly that they must no longer “*walk like the Gentiles*” (4:17; 5:2,8,15).
- Ephesus was a proud and sophisticated pagan city. It was also a dark and godless city and Paul paints its spiritual condition in lurid terms.
- ***It was futile in its thinking (17)*** – its whole approach to life was vain, empty and futile. The world offers satisfaction and happiness but it cannot deliver (Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:1-26). God rescued us from this empty way of life (1 Peter 1:18).
- ***It was darkened in its understanding (18)*** – the evidence for God’s existence is seen in creation and the human conscience (Psalm 19:1-5; Romans 1:18-20), but people suppress this knowledge because they do not want to submit to their Creator (Romans 1:21-23).
- ***It was reckless in its living (19)*** – having cut themselves off from God they have now lost any moral restraints and live to please themselves.
- The world is very seductive – do they really want to go back to this? They are called to live holy lives (1 Peter 1:13-16).

C. Remember what you were saved for (4:20-24)

- Paul proclaimed the gospel in Ephesus for three years (Acts 19:1-22). They heard the message of salvation and, having believed, became new creatures who turned from paganism to the living God (1:13-14).
- As disciples they enlisted in Christ’s school – He became their teacher and their curriculum (Matthew 28:18-20). They are to grow in holiness.
- Sanctification is both negative and positive – it is like taking off filthy clothes, washing ourselves thoroughly and then putting on new clothes.
- ***They must put off the old nature (22)*** – At conversion they flung off the old way of life (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). They must continue to fight against sin, putting it to death every day (Colossians 3:5-9).
- ***They must be spiritually renewed (23)*** – They became new creations at conversion (2 Corinthians 5:17). They must be renewed every day by the power of the Holy Spirit (1:17; 3:16; 5:18) through the agency of the Word (Colossians 3:10,16; Romans 12:2).
- ***They must put on the new nature (24)*** – They were clothed in the righteousness of Christ when they first believed (1 Corinthians 1:30; Philippians 3:7-11). Now they must deliberately clothe themselves in Christ – sanctification is the process of being transformed into the likeness of Christ and becoming like Him (5:1-2; Colossians 3:12-14).
- In the next section Paul explains how this works in practice (4:25-5:7).