

EPHESIANS

Part 8: “Renewed”

Ephesians 4:17-5:2

Sunday, October 7, 2018

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Scripture Reading

¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ¹

This is God’s word.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for sending your Son Jesus to die for the sins of the world, so that all who believe might have the gift of new and eternal life. May your Holy Spirit help us to *know* this good news and help us to live in light of this good news. In Jesus’s mighty name we pray, AMEN.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Eph 4:17–5:2.

Introduction

Last May, my wife woke up in the still, dark hours of a Saturday morning to meet up with a few other women from our Community Group. Why were these women of God gathering so early on a weekend? Was it to pray or study Scripture or share in a deep theological discussion? Not that day. It was to watch the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle (show [1RoyalWedding](#)). Apparently, they were not alone in their anglophilia either. According to [statista.com](#), over 29 million *Americans* tuned in to watch this event.

Now, despite our history of casting off English rule, I think Americans have always had a bit of a fascination with British royalty. I think it amazes us that somewhere across the ocean there are people who are called “your majesty” that live in castles and palaces. It is so outside of our way of life and experience that it holds a mystique of *otherness*.

And I think that mystique is the reason this wedding in particular captivated the imaginations of so many Americans. After all, Prince Harry wasn’t just marrying another noblewoman with ancient royal bloodlines. He was marrying a commoner, an American commoner, and an American commoner of mixed-race.

On this day, Meghan Markle who was once a little girl in who grew up in California was becoming royalty.

As I was thinking about this over the last week, I came across a story of just how big of a change this was for Meghan Markle’s life.² In fact, there are several things that she cannot do now that she is a member of the royal family.

Some of these things are common sense (she can’t go shopping by herself anymore). Some of these things are surprising (she can’t vote in national elections anymore). Some of these things are odd (she can’t sit with her legs crossed anymore). And some things are actually pretty good ideas for any human person (she is not allowed to take selfies or be on social media anymore).

But the big idea is this: the viewers of the royal wedding were not just watching a civil ceremony. In some ways, they were witnessing a woman who was beginning an entirely new life.

In some ways, Paul is saying the something similar has happened for every man, woman, and child who has become a believer in Jesus. There are some ways that our life must now be fundamentally changed because of the love of Jesus. There are some things that we maybe once did that we are not allowed to do anymore.

² Krista Torres. “Here’s A List Of All The Things Meghan Markle Can’t Do Now That She’s A Royal Duchess.” [Buzzfeed](#). May 21, 2018. <https://www.buzzfeed.com/kristatorres/heres-a-list-of-no-nos-for-meghan-markle-now-that-shes-a>

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have become a member of a new royal family. You are blessed beyond measure. Your life has been changed forever. And, as Paul said earlier in this chapter, you are to walk in a manner that is worthy of the call you have been given (cf. Eph. 4:1).

So today, we are going to look deeper into this passage of Scripture before us to learn what it means to be renewed in Christ.

We will divide our study into two big sections: **1.) The Doctrines of Renewal and 2.) The Disciplines of Renewal.**

Exposition

1.) The Doctrines of Renewal.

- A doctrine is a belief or an idea that the Bible teaches.
- The Bible is true. So when the Bible teaches an idea, God's people are morally obligated to believe that idea and accept that idea as true.
- In this first paragraphs, there are tow doctrines we must believe to be true: a.) the doctrine of our former life, and b.) the doctrine of our new life.

The doctrine of our former life.

- The Church of Ephesus is still in a deeply pagan context.
- Nevertheless, Paul commands the Ephesian Christians, "you must not walk as the Gentiles do" (4:17).
- What are the "Gentiles"? Gentiles are a word that means "non-Jewish people." Literally, Gentiles are the "ethnei" (ἔθνη), "the nations," "the rest of the world."
- "Don't walk like the Gentiles" is an interesting thing for Paul to say to the Christians in Ephesus because ethnically, most of the Ephesians are Gentiles.
- But because of their faith in Jesus, they are no longer to view themselves like Gentiles; rather they are to view themselves as God's people. Their Gentile way of life must now be considered their former way of life.
- If we are God's people, we can no longer live like the rest of the world.
- God is like a parent who says to his children, "Other kids can watch those shows and say those words, but not my kids!"
- We are God's people now. We must no longer walk in the way of the world. This is continuation of the charge to walk in a manner worthy.
- Why do the Gentiles live like they do?
- They are darkened understanding of God, they are alienated from the life of God, and their hearts are hardened and calloused to God.

- Our life flows from what we believe to be true about God.
- This doesn't mean that atheists are unable to believe and act in moral ways.
- What it does mean is that they cannot explain moral obligation.
- Without God, life is mere matter in motion. Go get what is yours, as long as you don't hurt too many people along the way.
 - Gentiles are given to sensuality – gratifying the flesh; even if it is morally wrong; there is nothing to regulate such a desire
 - Gentiles are greedy to practice every type of impurity – “greedy” implies we can never have enough; money acts as a source of comfort, security, or significance.
- If our hope is in this world, our life will show.
- This manner of life is the “old self” (παλαιὸν ἑαυτοῦ) with deceitful desires; desires that lie by saying “here is pleasure,” but their reality and end is death.
- But that is not the way you learned Christ.
- We have not merely learned Christ as the one who is the God-man. We have not just learned about his life, death, and his resurrection.³
- We have been taught that that Christ is Lord.
- Our theology will drive our lives
- Is your God as distant God (who isn't involved), a buddy God (who doesn't care about sin), or a good and just God that is Lord?
- People who truly know God should be and must be different. What we expect of the world shouldn't be expected of us.
- We must not allow our hearts to become hardened.
- Rejection of God's truth leads to a hardness of heart, which leads to being given over to our own sinful desires (cf. Rom. 1:18-25).

The doctrine of our new life.

- Christianity is a way of belief that must necessarily lead to new a way of life
- Put off the old self and put on the new self (καὶνὸν ἑαυτοῦ) and walk in the new self.
- This new self is the truest self that is created by God.
- The word created (κτισθέντα) is a passive verb; we don't do this work.
- *We must understand that there is a crucial distinction between recreation (God's work) and repentance (which is Holy Spirit empowered response to God's work).*⁴
- We can understand the work of repentance by understanding Paul's command to “put on the new self” is a clothing metaphor.

³ John R. W. Stott, [*God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 179.

⁴ Ibid. 182.

- Clothes are appropriate to the role we are playing and the position we are in.⁵
- You would never wear gym clothes in a wedding chapel.
- You would never wear a tuxedo or a wedding dress in a gym.
- When you are in Christ you would never put a life that is given to sin; rather you are to put on “righteous and holiness.”
- We must be reminded of the truth and renewed by the Spirit.
- We do this by knowing and meditating on the truth of God’s word (cf. Ps. 1:1-4).
- We must be reminded daily of who God is, who we are, who we are called to be in Christ, and then partner with the Holy Spirit to align our lives with that truth.
- But how does this look in real life? What should this look like on this afternoon and tomorrow morning?

2.) The Disciplines of Renewal.

- Most people associate the word disciple with punishment. That is not how I want to use that word today.
- **A discipline is a practice or habit that the Bible commands.**
- The Bible is true. So when the Bible teaches a discipline, God’s people are morally obligated to obey and accept that discipline as true.

Practicing honesty instead of falsehood.

- Why do we lie? We lie as a way to manipulate reality with our words
- We may be tempted to lie as a way to get approval or a way to escape responsibility.
- But a manipulation of reality is a distortion of reality.
- John Stott says, “For fellowship is built on trust, and trust is built on truth. So falsehood undermines fellowship, while truth strengthens it.”⁶

Managing healthy conflict instead of letting anger lead us to sin.

- There is biblical distinction between righteous anger and unrighteous anger
- I have heard anger defined as “energy released to defend something you love.”⁷
- There can be righteous anger. We can have righteous anger: to stand up for ourselves, for those we love, the truth of God, against injustice against our fellow man.
- The problem is we love the wrong things too much: our reputation, our ego, our comfort, our sin.
- Such unrighteous anger can provide “opportunity” for the devil.

⁵ Ibid. 183.

⁶ Ibid.185.

⁷ Timothy Keller. *God’s Wisdom for Navigating Life: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Book of Proverbs.* (New York: Viking, 2017), 120.

- Remember of the sin of Cain: “*If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it*” (Genesis 4:7, ESV).

Practicing hard work and generosity instead of an “I take what I want” mentality.

- Stealing includes taking things that aren’t yours. You can steal products from store or possessions from someone’s house or care, but theft can include other things: like stealing time from your job; evading taxes; unfairly compensating your employees.
- Christians should be known as people who are known for honesty, diligence, excellence, and integrity in our work.
- We are to work not just to acquire sustenance and comfort for ourselves; but so that we can practice radical generosity.
- It really is better to give than it is to receive.
- This is why we want to be a generous people.

Committing our words that build up instead of words that corrupt.

- Corrupting words include cynicism, crudeness, gossip, and criticism.
- It is easy to tear down and mock with our words.
- But our powerful and creative capacity for language is a gift unique to the *Imago Dei*. Christian should seek to give words that inspire hope, edification, and encouragement.
- The book of Proverbs compares our capacity of language to sowing seed that bear fruit. That fruit can be life or death.
- “*From the fruit of a man’s mouth his stomach is satisfied; he is satisfied by the yield of his lips. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits*” (Proverbs 18:20–21, ESV).
- What fruit are you sowing with your words?

Pursuing kindness and love instead of allowing bitterness to fester.

- Bitterness and anger are the most natural ways to respond to pain.
- But we are to practice forgiveness (literally giving grace) toward our neighbor.
- We are to forgive as Christ forgave us.
- If our whole worldview is built on grace, shouldn’t people see grace in lived out in our lives?

Instead of grieving the Holy Spirit, we are to give our lives to God as worship.

Conclusion

Is this just another list to obey? No. And understanding the reason why is key to understanding Christianity.

As in all of Ephesians, imperatives flow from the indicatives. An indicative is a statement of reality.

An imperative is a command.

What we are to do flows from, is motivated by, and empowered by who you are and by what Christ has done by dying on the cross and rising again to life.

Christ took what was ours so we could take what was his.
He took on rejection so we could be accepted.
He took on hatred so we could be loved.
He took on death so that we could take on life.
He took on our sin so we could take on his righteousness.

We have been given a new life. We are part of a new family. We can no longer walk the way the rest of the world walks.

May we be those who embrace the truth of the new life Christ has given us. And may we put on this new life and live lives of worship for the glory of his name.

Community Group Discussion Starters

- 1.) *Read Ephesians 4:17-5:2. How would you summarize this passage in your own words?*
- 2.) *From verse 4:17-24, what are the big differences between the old self and the new self? If you are a Christian, have you seen evidences of the "new self" in your life since coming to believe in Jesus?*
- 3.) *Verses 4:25-5:2 discuss different commands that we are to follow, as ways of putting on the "new self." Which of these commands do you find the most helpful to be reminded of?*
- 4.) *According to this passage, what is the motivation behind obeying the various commands listed?*

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