



A Change of Clothes - Eph 4:17-32

Jan 5 - Dave Navarro

INTRO

In Ephesians 4, the book shifts into a new focus. Paul has been telling the Ephesians about the work of God in the universe. Now he starts to explain how they can best live in response to God's work in the universe. And as part of that, he challenges the Gentiles among them to abandon some destructive ways of living. Ethically speaking, he's inviting them to change their clothes.

Open with prayer¹, then read Eph 4:17-32 together as a group. Consider dividing it by paragraph. It's helpful to all use the same Bible translation. SLC preaches from the NLT.

SERMON RECAP

1. Intro & Context
2. Paul calls out the Gentiles (V17)
 - a. Is this Paul being intolerant? Racially superior?
 - b. Need to zoom out to understand this verse.
 - c. Paul's theology of Gentile inclusion (Eph 2)
 - d. Paul's 2 years of relationship with Ephesian Gentiles (Acts 19:10)
3. Destructive living (V17-19)
 - a. A sharp ethical divide in 1st century Greco-Roman world, between Jew and Gentile.
 - b. Jews were highly religious - too religious, in fact.
 - c. Gentiles highly irreligious. Led to two big issues.
 - i. Pagan idolatry
 - ii. Oppressive sexual promiscuity

¹ Some groups prefer to begin with a longer time of sharing and prayer. This is a good instinct and ensures that prayer time doesn't get shortened by time constraints.



- d. Paul's dilemma
 - i. Referred back to Ephesians 2. Sin and wrath not arbitrary. Sin is choosing to settle for less, and God's wrath is his opposition to anything that damages or defaces his people.
 - ii. Paul's heart for the Gentiles is the same. Paul's love led him to say "come as you are," but also to say, "there's a more beautiful way to live."
- 4. Change Your Clothes (V20-24)
 - a. THROW OFF sin, and PUT ON new nature.
- 5. Vice/Virtue list (V25-32)
 - a. A common rhetorical device in ancient world.
 - b. This is Paul's description of the kind of Jesus-follower he was trying to form.
 - c. I encourage you to use this list to check in this week.
- 6. Takeaways
 - a. Start with love
 - i. Before we correct/critique people, do they know we're FOR them?
 - b. Called to transformation
 - i. See V20-24. The mixture of personal action, and Holy Spirit's action.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In 4:17, Paul uses the word "walk" to describe a person's way of being in the world. (In the NLT, it's translated as "live," but "walk" is more literal.) This term is used frequently in the New Testament, both positively and negatively.
 - a. Spend some time reading the following "walk" verses aloud: Romans 8:4; Corinthians 3:3, 2 Corinthians 4:2; 2 Corinthians 5:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:6
 - b. Identify the "walk" instructions in each verse.
 - c. Read back the "walk" instructions. Is there one that stands out as relevant to you personally?
2. Ephesians 4:17-19 gives a diagnosis of the Greco-Roman Gentiles' destructive way of living.² According to these verses, where does the destructiveness begin, and where does it end?

² Hint: It moves from the inside, out.



3. Ephesians 4:20 says, literally, “That is not the way you learned Christ!” This is an unusual expression. What might it mean to “learn Christ”? Use V21-24 to help.
4. Read Ephesians 5:25-32. These ethical instructions were originally written for the Ephesians, and not specifically for 21st-century Canadians. Yet certainly they are good and helpful instructions for us today!
 - a. How authoritative are these instructions for us today? Or, in what way are they authoritative for us today? Before you answer, read ahead and look at Eph 5:22-24; 6:5-8.
 - b. Is there something in this virtue/vice list that you believe you need to work on in 2020? Share as much as you’re comfortable. (Agree beforehand on safety and confidentiality.)

ACT & PRAY

1. As a group, share areas of praise and need. Write them down so you can be praying for them during the week.
2. Remind yourselves of your Adopt-a-Missionary, and any prayer requests you’ve seen from them.
3. Spend time praying, either all together, or in smaller groups. Feel free to experiment with silent prayer, written prayer, etc.

