

Ephesians 4:17–24 | “No More!”
Preached on August 24, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

Turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 4, verses 17 to 24. *[pauseeeee]*

A lot of times, we separate our lives by big, important moments. [pause]

Maybe you divide your life by highlighting the time before you got married and the time after you got married, or maybe it’s before you had kids and after. *[pauseeee]*

Recently, I have found that people separate time by saying “before COVID” and “after COVID.” [pause]

Maybe for you it’s some other big, life-transforming event like before cancer and after cancer, or some other vital moment. *[pause]*

We talk this way because something so big and life-altering happened, and it truly changed our lives. [pauseee]

Often, we will even point out that we are not the same person as we were before that event happened.

Well in our passage today, Paul will also talk that way, for he will talk about our old self and our new self.

That is, he will speak about an old way of living and a new way. *[pauseeee]*

Like getting married or having kids, we aren’t the same as we were before, but in an even more radical, transforming way, for our whole identity has changed.

We are actually new people in Christ, and so it should impact the way that we live, and that’s what we find in our text today. *[pauseeee]*

When Paul began chapter 4 of Ephesians, he called us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling, and now he picks that idea back up.

So listen to what he says when it comes to how we ought to live, and especially how we are to NOT live. *[READ 17–24]*

Paul’s first point is that we are to...

I. No longer live like an unbeliever!

There are some Christians who think that the Christian life is all about theology, and that’s it. *[pause]*

They love to talk and debate theological topics, but they leave their Christian life up in the clouds of theology alone. [pause]

They may be able to discuss the most complex and deep doctrines, but they are mean and arrogant towards others.

They have the brain of a master theologian, but the lifestyle of a heathen. *[pauseee]*

There are other Christians who treat their faith as detached from their daily life, for they see it as just an extra thing that they do on the side. *[pause]*

They see it as simply a way to meet people in the community and get involved.

Or they see it as just something that good people do—they do the whole church thing. *[pauseee]*

While they may appear godly, for they attend church—on a daily basis, their faith isn't lived out, and they look *just* like the world around them. *[pause]*

On Sunday they look like a shining saint, but on Monday they look like a shameless sinner.

But listen to what Paul says in verse 17, “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.” *[pauseeee]*

God deeply cares about how we live. *[pause]*

He doesn't just want our theological knowledge or church attendance—He wants us to *live* in a godly way. *[pauseee]*

He doesn't see your church attendance on Sunday, and say, “OK, check. You are good to go for the week now. See you next Sunday.”

He cares about how you are living on Monday at 2, Wednesday at 6, and Friday at 8—and every other time in between. *[pause]*

The Lord cares both how you think and how you act.

We must remember this—our faith is to impact every single area and every single moment of our life, for God cares about it *all*. *[pauseee]*

In fact, to highlight how big of a deal this is, Paul says, “I say and *testify in the Lord*, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.” *[pause]*

That word ‘testify’ really has the idea of imploring, insisting on, or exhorting solemnly.

So speaking in God's name and under God's authority, Paul testifies how we ought NOT to live. *[pause]*

By putting it that way, Paul is highlighting the *importance* of this command—it is not to be ignored or breezed over, but heeded. *[pauseee]*

Do you take godly living seriously? *[pause]*

Do you remember that God cares about how you live? *[pauseeee]*

Now what exactly was the command that Paul gave? To no longer walk as the Gentiles do. *[pause]*

As I brought up in previous weeks, ‘to walk,’ speaks about your lifestyle, or the characteristic way that you live. *[pause]*

Also, the word ‘Gentiles’ here refers to people who we would call unbelievers, the lost, or the unsaved—those who don’t trust in Christ. *[pause]*

Many Ephesian Christians were Gentiles, who had been saved, and that seems to be Paul’s primary focus here—he doesn’t want them living like how they used to. *[pauseeee]*

Christians should live differently than unbelievers do—that shouldn’t be a radical statement in our day, but I feel like it is. *[pause]*

I find that so many professing Christians try to find ways that they can live like the world without crossing the line, but really, we should be looking for ways to not live like the world. *[pause]*

There should be a marked difference between how we live and how people who don’t know Christ live.

We should not easily blend in, or that’s a bad sign. *[pauseeee]*

Paul says to “no longer” live like Gentiles, meaning, we should say, “no more!”

We should think, “I want a clean break from that lifestyle! I don’t want to pursue it anymore, I don’t want any more of it.” *[pauseeee]*

Is that your mentality when it comes to your old, pre-Christ lifestyle?

Are you saying, “No more!” or are you saying, “Oooo, that looks good. I wish I had that again?” *[pauseeee]*

Now I’m not saying that at times you won’t be tempted by that lifestyle, for there’s a reason why Paul had to say to *no longer* live that way.

It’s because Christians still sometimes struggle with the temptation to live that old, pre-Christ way, but we should battle that temptation with the truth. *[pause]*

We should say, “No more! I have been saved by Christ, and I have been called to a new manner of life.” *[pauseeeee]*

So what is this “walk” that characterizes the unsaved? *[pauseeee]*

As we go through life, it’s easy to become deceived by what’s really going on with unbelievers.

For our world makes it look like those who don't follow Christ are the ones who have all the fun, and who have it all. *[pause]*

They make it look like they are so happy, so exciting, so interesting.

But if you could 'open the curtain' of an unbeliever's life, what would you *really* see? *[pause]*

That's what Paul reveals to us in this text—what's really going on at the deepest of levels, and not on the surface. *[pauseeee]*

We must remember that whenever we are tempted by the lifestyle of the world—not all is as it appears.

They may look so happy, so blessed, so prosperous, and like they have the “good life,” but not all is as it appears. *[pause]*

Their smiles, possessions, pursuits, experiences, and thrills are masking what's truly going on underneath it all. *[pauseeeee]*

I find that way too many Christians are 'following' the celebrities and influencers of the world, and acting like *they* have the good life.

They try to imitate their lifestyle, or at least long for it, but they are neglecting the state of those who deny Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Just listen to this tragic description, starting at the end of verse 17—they walk “in the futility of their minds...

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...

They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.” *[pauseeee]*

In talking about the state of unbelievers, let's group their characteristics by talking about their heart, their thinking, their actions, and their relationship to God. *[pauseeee]*

First, their heart—we are told that they have a hard heart and are callous. *[pause]*

This is the root cause of everything else—they do not want to know and follow God. *[pauseeee]*

Scripture does not portray sinful humanity as innocent victims of an angry God, rather, they are described as being culpable for their dire state. *[pause]*

Even over in Romans 1, Paul says that people suppress the truth, and so are without excuse.¹ *[pause]*

¹ A reference to Romans 1:18–21.

This reminds us that people who do not trust Christ are hard-hearted because they do not *want* to hear the truth, and verse 19 tells us that as a result, “they have become callous.” *[pauseeee]*

When you get a callous on your hand, the skin on your hand is no longer as sensitive to things that you touch anymore.

So also, when unbelievers continue in hard-heartedness, they become callous to sin. *[pause]*

They are no longer concerned with the shame and guilt of sin, and their conscience doesn’t prick them as much as it used to. *[pauseeee]*

So that’s their heart, and it’s not a pleasant picture, but let’s consider their *thinking* next. *[pause]*

We are told that they live in the futility of their minds, they are darkened in their understanding, and there is ignorance in them.

Now that’s an awful state to be in! *[pause]*

They do not see or know the truth, and so they pursue empty, worthless things.

And this is why ‘the lost’ do not live life pursuing or caring about what’s most important, or what’s eternal—they are living in the futility of their minds. *[pause]*

As one commentator put it, “Life is vain, futile, and without purpose unless it is ordered around God and his purposes.”² *[pauseeee]*

We saw unbelievers’ hearts and thinking, but let’s consider the description of their *actions*. *[pause]*

The passage says that they “have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.” *[pauseeee]*

Due to their callousness, they hand themselves over to more and more sin.

And this is because when life has no purpose, your main purpose becomes self-indulgence. *[pauseeee]*

Self-indulgence is really the meaning behind sensuality, for it’s a lifestyle that lacks self-restraint, and goes beyond what is right. *[pauseeee]*

Paul expands and goes further than this, for he adds that they are, “greedy to practice every kind of impurity.” *[pauseeee]*

It’s not just that these people do sin from time to time, but they are “greedy to practice every kind of impurity.” *[pause]*

² Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 281.

‘To be greedy’ here is used in the sense of wanting more and more, and never being satisfied.
[pauseeee]

Sinful practices never satisfy, but always leave you with a desire for more, and in reality, these people make these things their “practice” or “pursuit.”

So instead of pursuing holiness, they pursue every kind of immorality. [pauseeee]

Lastly and most tragically, we find their relationship to God, and it is separation from Him and His life. [pause]

You can’t expect to have life, if you have rejected the Life-giver.

And so they do not have eternal life, but are under condemnation, and are bound for Hell.
[pauseeee]

As you think about this description of the state of unbelievers, what’s the whole purpose?
[pause]

Is it to be mean and to bash them?

Certainly not, for Paul doesn’t share this so that we would stick up our noses at them, but so that we would be encouraged not to go back and live that old way. [pause]

That way of life was our *old* way of life, for why do you think he said to “no longer” walk like the Gentiles do? [pauseeee]

As Paul brought out earlier in Ephesians, that was the way that we “once walked,” but now we have been saved by the grace of God!³

We were once darkened in our understanding, hard-hearted, walking in the futility of our minds, and separated from the life of God.

But now, based solely on the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ, we are no longer in that dire state! [pause]

And so we say “no more!” to that old lifestyle, for we say with Paul, “that is not the way that I learned Christ!” [pauseeee]

That’s what we will see next, as Paul explains HOW we no longer live that way anymore, for...

II. You have learned a new way of living in Christ!

After describing the state and lifestyle of unbelievers, Paul says, “But that is not the way you learned Christ!” [pauseeee]

³ See Ephesians 2:1–10.

In Jesus, we have a new identity and a new way of life that is to be shaped by Him.

So that old way of life has nothing to do with this new way of life, for we have learned and been taught a different way to live. *[pauseeee]*

Being a Christian is not a nice little label to add to our resume, it's not a thing to do on the side, or a mere social benefit.

It's not something to do in a rote, mechanical way, either. *[pause]*

Becoming a Christian is something that radically changes your whole identity and way of life. *[pause]*

When I become a disciple or follower of Christ, I am now connected to Christ and am to be shaped by Him and His teachings.

I submit to His rule, and let His values govern how I think and act. *[pause]*

That means that my everyday life should reflect Christ and His teachings, not just my Sunday mornings. *[pause]*

My political views should reflect Christ, my attitude and thinking should, my speech should, my actions should, and every other aspect of me. *[pauseeee]*

You can't expect to live a godly life, if it is devoid of Christ. *[pause]*

Some people try to live by some generic moral code of their own making. *[pause]*

Others try to change by just trying hard enough on their own.

But true, godly living is empowered by, changed by, shaped by, and reflective of Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Does your life look different than it did before you turned to Jesus? *[pause]*

What about this—does your life look different from the unbelieving world? *[pauseeee]*

To battle that “old life” temptation, Paul tells us “to put off your old self,” and “to put on the new self.” *[pause]*

As a Christian, I have an old self and a new one, an old identity and a new one...

I was once ‘in Adam’ and now I am ‘in Christ.’ *[pause]*

I was once under condemnation, and now I am no longer under condemnation. *[pause]*

I was once bound for Hell, now I'm bound for Heaven.

The list could go on and on. *[pause]*

We are put off that old identity and its old way of life, and now put on our new identity and its way of life, for that's who we are now. *[pauseeee]*

Think of a prisoner in jail—they always have to wear prison clothes. *[pause]*

Maybe it's the orange jumpsuit or a striped black and white pattern that some people think of.

But when someone becomes free, they take off those clothes and hopefully never wear them again because that's no longer their life. *[pause]*

They have a new life.

That prisoner took off those prison clothes, so now they shouldn't act like a prisoner, but they should act like a freed man. *[pauseeeee]*

For us Christians, we once lived in those sins, but now things are different—that was your old life, so you must put that lifestyle away like old clothes. *[pause]*

On the other side, we put on our new identity and lifestyle, like new, fresh clothes.

We put on godly characteristics because it reflects that we are Christians. *[pauseeeee]*

I think of times when parents tell their children, “You are a Miller, now act like a Miller.”

So also, you are in Christ, so act like one in Christ.

“Be who you are!” is what Paul is saying. *[pauseeeee]*

To ‘put off’ and ‘put on’ shows that this aspect of the Christian life is not passive, but active. *[pause]*

We do this motivated by God and empowered by His Spirit, but we must still take an active role. *[pause]*

We can't just sit back idle in our lives and expect growth in leaps and bounds, but it takes a conscious intentionality to say, “I'm not going to lie, but speak the truth.” *[pauseeee]*

Also, significant here is that it's not just putting off, but also putting on...

We don't just put away sin, but we put on Christlike characteristics, for that old way of living, the vices, must be *replaced* with good qualities. *[pause]*

So Christian, no longer be who you used to be, but be who you are now in Christ—reflect that in your life.

And a big key for doing this is by being “renewed in the spirit of your mind.” *[pauseeee]*

As we dwell upon the truth, so our mind is renewed by the Spirit, so that we think, and therefore, live differently. *[pause]*

Your life becomes more and more Christ-shaped, as your mind is truth-renewed. *[pauseeee]*

This is an ongoing, continual process of renewal that happens in our mind by the work of the Spirit, using the truth of God's Word.

So that over time: our thoughts, attitudes, worldview, and values morph to be in line with Scripture, and as a result, your way of life looks different. *[pauseeee]*

That means that a Christian whose mind is being renewed doesn't think the same as the world, but has a different mindset, attitude, and value system. *[pauseeee]*

The old way of life and the new way of life look very different when you zoom out and see all of what Paul has said. *[pause]*

The old self was characterized by futile, darkened, ignorant thinking, but the new self is thinking that's being renewed by truth. *[pause]*

The old self is corrupt through deceitful desires, while the new self reflects God's righteousness and holiness. *[pauseeee]*

So what is Paul calling us to do, and saying to us this morning?...

He's saying, "Don't go back to that old way of life, but remember what you were taught in Christ for how to live!" *[pause]*

And so that means, fellow believer...

Live life in a way that corresponds with who you are now in Christ!

As you go through the routines of life, it's easy to forget that God greatly cares about how you live your daily life. *[pause]*

He isn't concerned with your going through the motions of Christianity. *[pause]*

He isn't primarily concerned that you are the smartest theologian in Clearfield.

He cares about how you think and act—that is, how you live your life. *[pauseeee]*

So what does your typical, day-to-day lifestyle look like? *[pause]*

Would the people that know you the best and are around you the most, consider you a godly person? *[pause]*

Would your co-workers say that you seem to blend in with all of your other co-workers? *[pause]*

Are you obsessed with the celebrities and influencers of this age?

Or are you truly striving to be a godly, Christ-like person. *[pauseeee]*

This is not to say that you will be or are perfect, but that your overall way of life is one that seeks to be like Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Paul is making it clear that there should be a difference between our ‘pre-Christ’ manner of life, and our ‘in Christ’ manner of life. *[pause]*

And how do we progress in this area?

We put off that old self and put on the new. *[pause]*

In reliance upon the Lord, we seek to remember and live out our new identity in Christ. *[pause]*

I am no longer a slave to sin, but I have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. *[pause]*

Now I don’t have to give into those temptations, or live that old way, but I can put it away, by resisting it.

And instead, I seek to do what’s right, and live for my Lord by remembering that He has forgiven me, and made me His.

I am truly a new creation in Him!⁴ *[pauseeee]*

So I will depend on Him, and I will be in His Word, letting Him renew my mind.

And over time, as you do this, your mind becomes more focused on things that matter, your heart more sensitive to the Lord, and your actions more in line with the Savior. *[pauseeee]*

What else could I do for my Lord, who gave His life for me? *[pause]*

Though I was living for myself, spiritually dead, blind, and alienated from God, yet in lavish grace, Jesus Christ died for me, and then rose again. *[pause]*

He forgave my sin, gave me eternal life, and made me new—I am born again because of Him!

And now I *want* to live for Him, and I *should* live for Him, who loves me so much and has given me everything I need to walk in a manner worthy of my calling. *[pauseeee]*

Christian, live life in a way that corresponds with who you are now in Christ!

⁴ A reference to 2 Corinthians 5:17.