

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

25 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. 26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not make room for the devil. 28 Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. 29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. 31 Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, 32 and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, 2 and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (NRSV).

The church in Ephesus had Gentile Christians that needed to figure out how to connect to the church's Jewish heritage. This is quite different from the Apostle Paul's experience of Jewish believers trying to conscript Jewish heritage on Gentile Christians. At stake is our identity as the body of Christ. Ephesians addresses the ligaments of the body being linked to the head. The church grows as Christ's body. The connection is intimate between the cosmic Christ and the worldwide church. Unity is required because each individual part has the same God, same Spirit, same confession, same baptism, and same salvation. The letter was written when Gentile Christians outnumber the Jewish Christians and argues that the non-Jews are members of the same community as the Jewish believers. They both share the same experience of God through Christ. The tension is between heritage of the Torah observant and the heritage of those that do not observe the Torah. The two groups must be united as one body and recognize that they are a single community of God's people despite the obvious differences. Some will keep the Sabbath and some do not. Some keep kosher foods laws and some do not. The different practices are valid. It is the less important things that separate us. It is the more important things that unite us. It is our important commonalities that keep us together in the midst of diversity.

The Scripture starts with words "so then," once again our text is based on previous writing. It is an appeal for a changed lifestyle. You must no longer live as the Gentiles live, by the rest of society, their understanding is dark. They are alienated from God because they are ignorant and stubborn. They practice greedy impurity instead of putting to practice the teachings of Christ. Put away your former lifestyle and clothe yourselves with the new self that is in the likeness of God; not just the physical but the spiritual likeness as well.

So then since you are to live a new life in the image of Christ, you are made in the likeness of God's Holy Spirit, therefore, your life is not one that is conscripted to rules. That is darkness. You are guided by the light to focus on the love not the law. The righteous lifestyle is focused on serving others and helping to build others up. Get rid of all bitterness, wrath, and anger within you. Instead, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, and forgiving. That is exactly what God is what is for you, that is exactly what Christ is for you, and that is exactly how we are to be for others. We are to imitate God. We do

that by observing, studying, and following the example of Christ. He is our role model. Live in love as Christ lived in love for us. Live in love as Jesus, in love, gave himself up for us. Live in love as an offering of thanks to God.

Christians should already know we are to be imitators of Lord. It is in God's image that you were created. You are to behave as a renewed person. Your words, actions, and reactions are a reflection of Christ. The Lord's saving grace is one of sacrifice. It is an offering of love to us for our forgiveness. Christians are to behave differently from the rest of the world, discern the will of God, be full of the Holy Spirit, and give thanks to God through devotion.

It is quite challenging to live different from the rest of the world

Live as the church in the world

World = alienated from God – due to ignorance

Preference = impurity & greed

Jewish conviction = privileged status

More insight into God

Christ = model

Love & accepted all – as equal – same

Imagery of new life = drawn from clothing

Indicate = change of character & lifestyle

We are to put off – like taking off dirty clothes

Put off = deceitful desires

Never fully satisfies

Consumes more than it fulfils

Chris = new image for humanity

Model for personal relationships and conduct

Secret Place Devotional

Story – while back

Person in sanctuary

Had = very difficult week

Needs – quiet place, prayer, reflection

When communion served – welcome anticipated consolation

Two girls behind me

Got bored with adult church

Began, poking, giggling, snickering

I prayer – Oh God, I need you now

Why this interruption

Communion – bread passed

One girl said “Oh look a Barbie loaf”

They chuckled

I saw no humor in their irrelevance

I prayed – God please be with me this morning

God's response

I am right here behind you

That is exactly – implication of Jesus

When Jesus said – love one another

When Jesus said do unto others

We are to see others
Through the eyes of Christ
Love, compassion, understanding

Conclusion

The conversion = transformation
The inner being – transformed into – loving and caring person
Sees self – not as someone that is perfect
But someone – guided by the light
Light leads you – away from negativity – vices
deception, anger, greed, vengeance
Towards = positive – virtues
Kindness, gentleness, forgiveness
Positive things make you feel better about self
And better relationship with others
Regardless of setting – small groups, large groups, states