

SERMON NOTES

EPHESIANS 4.17-24

THE OLD LIFE AND THE NEW

INTRODUCTION

When I was a student at university I lived a double life. Most of the time I dressed casually, wandered around with my hands in my pockets and apart from attending lectures and tutorials organised my time pretty much as I pleased. But every second Wednesday evening during term time and for four or five weeks during University holidays I donned Army greens and lived the highly structured life of a citizen soldier. They were strikingly different lifestyles. As a university student I never marched around, I seldom called anyone “Sir” and at night I almost never slept in a tent and certainly never slept in a weapons pit. As a soldier I did these things all the time. But the two lives seldom overlapped: there was my army life and lifestyle and my student life and lifestyle. The two ran in parallel. They were just two aspects of who I was. It is possible in the same way to live as a Christian on Sundays and as a pagan for the rest of the week. In the verses we are to consider this morning Paul says, “You can’t do this. If you are a Christian, you must live as a Christian all the time. You can’t flip backwards and forwards into and out of the Christian faith.”

PAUL’S APOSTOLIC INSISTENCE (verse 17a)

Verse 17 begins the last major section of the letter and Paul begins it with the equivalent of Jesus’, “*Truly, truly, I say to you.*” His words here could be translated, “*Now this I say and insist on in the Lord.*”

STOP LIVING LIKE A PAGAN (verses 17b-19)

He begins perhaps unexpectedly with a negative, “*you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.*” The fundamental difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is not a matter of ethics or experience but understanding. Paul begins with the pagan’s mind, and traces his problem back to the hardened heart.

LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN (verses 20-21)

Paul exhorts his readers to live as Christians. He tells them to do two things:

1. Put Off Your Old Self (verse 22)

2. Put On Your New Self (verses 23-24)

