

Ephesians 4:17-24 May 8th

I wish that I had partied a little less. People always tell me to be true to myself but that is misleading because there are two selves, There's your short term self, and there's your long term self. And if you're only true to your short term self, your long term self slowly decays. - Humans of New York

She articulates what we all experience. Tension/battle over who we truly are. What "self" are we supposed to be true to. Being true to yourself isn't the answer, because part of yourself is destructive. But, we can't just dismiss every impulse that we have, because some of them are for our good.

I had a conversation with someone a few years ago, someone that had served in the ministry here at Calvary Cork, someone who gave many hours of their time volunteering here and now was just kind of floating around, not really attending any church consistently and I asked them what was going on with their lives. They said that they had spent so much of their lives doing the right thing, and trying to make other people happy and they decided to take a break and just "find themselves" and then "be themselves" for a little while.

I tried to plead with them that the version of them that was loving Jesus and serving His people and striving for holiness - that IS them. That is who they were made to be. There is no need to "find yourself" I know the real you, and you are living out of step with the real you right now.

Maybe We feel a similar tension in our own souls, between our "long term self" and our "short term self" whether we are trying to "find ourself" or "be ourself" or If we are somewhere between (as our passage here calls it) our old self and our new self. it is possible to have an identity crisis; to not really even truly know who we are. and if you do, to live in a way that is incongruous or out of step with our actual identity (if you don't know who you really truly are, listen up to these two different "selves" that Paul describes and see which one sounds like you.)

Big Idea: Out of our minds and identities come our lifestyle and actions. Formerly, we had a different identity and our lives matched that. Now, Jesus has given us a new identity so we are to be sure that our thinking and living lines up with that new (and true) identity.

We are supposed to "walk worthy of the calling" (positively stated)  
and not "walk as the Gentiles do" (negatively stated)

Paul does two things for us to help us grasp this: First he paints a dark picture of what our life without Christ was like and then he shows us (and reminds us) what it means to live in the reality of Christ and walking in His truth.

### **Old Self: v17-19**

The Gentiles: v17 by now we are probably familiar with this term, it is used a lot in ch 2 & 3, and it means a non-Jewish person. Paul obviously means non-christian gentiles, who populated the rest of the city of Ephesus

*"Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, ... — remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."* (Ephesians 2:11–12, ESV)

Christless, homeless, hopeless and Godless.

[FACTS ABOUT EPHEBUS]

Temple to Diana, a multi-breasted fertility goddess, worship - Magic etc

Paul “insists on it in the Lord” NIV using his strongest language yet that we pay attention and obey what he is about to say. He insists that we don’t walk like the Gentiles anymore.

It is unimaginable to Paul (and should be to us) that someone can have a legitimate encounter with Jesus Christ and then continue their life in the same direction and path as they were before meeting Him.

We all change (facebook memories and time hop give us reminders of what we were doing and what we were like 3+ years ago) ask yourself, are you more like Jesus or less like Jesus now than 3 years ago?

His readers knew from experience what he was talking about, for they had been pagans themselves and they were still living in a pagan environment. But they must live that way NO LONGER, even if all around them others continued to do so.

Once they were pagans and lived like it, now they are Christians and they must live like Christians.

at Calvary Cork our calling is to be a window to show the city of Cork a glimpse into the kingdom of God, but instead we are just a mirror reflecting back what is already there. The minute we lose our distinctiveness then we have nothing to offer.

What Characterised their former life?

futile mind (v17) darkened understanding, alienated due to ignorance, all due to a hard heart (v18) and then because of that, given over to sensuality and all sorts of impurity (v19)

we’ll talk about some of those things; but note how it is all “due to their hardness of heart” - this is the cause of all the other things.

it begins in the heart, which influences & shapes the mind, which directs the body, which then forms the lifestyle.

Hardness of heart: v18 a “wilful obtuseness.”

The word for hardness is “porsis” which means “a harder than marble” so in describing their hearts this way, Paul is saying their hearts are stone.

This is an unwillingness to respond to God’s truth.

Rom 1:18 (parallel ideas) describe men “who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” wilful and culpable...the result of their *deliberate refusal* of the moral light available to them in their own thought and conscience.

...Terrible downward path of evil, which begins with their obstinate rejection of God’s known truth.

hardness of heart leads to hardness of mind, then to deadness of soul under the judgment of God, and finally to recklessness of life.

Darkness of understanding: v18

an absence of spiritual understanding.

In ch 1:18 we thanked God that the eyes of our heart have been “enlightened” God overcame the darkness of our understanding-

but there was a time when                    we were blind,  
   in the dark, with our eyes closed,  
   with a blindfold over our tightly clenched eyelids.  
And we were loving it.

Become Callous, Given up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity: v19  
From this spawns reckless behaviour: reckless in that it is selfish and often careless, but also counter-intuitive. Callous means beyond feeling. Sensuality means a pursuit of pleasurable feelings.

“This doesn’t make me feel good, but i will keep trying.” - sound familiar? is that your past? is that your present?

Pretty grim picture of humanity painted here, and of course, not every person apart from Christ lives this way in every department of their life. But, every person apart from the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit is capable of this. (not everybody is as bad as they could be, but no one is as good as they should be )

### **New Self: v20-24**

but as for you (NIV)

A lot of this language is borrowed from the classroom: learn, hear, be taught,  
We have in mind here that there is a change that has happened to the believer, and it didn’t come from within. It was an external action, news reached them, and they heard and believed it.

As believers we hear about Jesus, we hear about His life and death and resurrection; we come to believe that the only thing that can save us from the consequence of our hardened hearts is the sacrifice of the perfect life of our perfect saviour. We believe that and we are saved. But; that isn’t the end of it!

We were taught, in Him, to put off our former self!

Our growth and progression in holiness is part of the gospel. that is what we “were taught” that is “the truth”

The Christ whom the Ephesians learned about was calling them to standards and values totally at variance with their former pagan life.

coming to faith in Christ gives you a new destiny in heaven, and a new identity on earth.

Things will be wonderful for us There and Then, and things will be different for us Here and Now.                    And we need to live that out.

An illustration of this is Lazarus. John 11:

Jesus spoke the word and he came alive

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” (John 5:24)*

After Lazarus was brought back to life Jesus said “Unbind him and let him go”

Take off the graveclothes, lazarus no longer belonged to the old dominion of dead, for he was now alive. why go around wearing grave clothes. take off the old and put on the new.

Jesus says the same to you. You no longer belong to the old corruption of sin; you belong to the new creation in Jesus. take off the grave clothes!

And we do this by “renewing in the spirit of your mind” v23

Conversion is a one time event that opens the door to a life long process (maybe like falling in love / getting married)

daily appropriate what we already possess.