

Christians are NOT Chameleons

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 June 2024

Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this evening, for a short while, and with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, Ephesians chapter 4.

Ephesians chapter 4, and if we read again at verse 17. Ephesians 4 and verse 17, where Paul writes, Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do 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 the hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

But that is not the way you learned Christ. That is not the way you learned Christ.

In this next section of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, one commentator had the interesting yet intriguing title, Christians are not chameleons.

[1 : 1 9] Christians are not chameleons. Chameleons, as you can see there, and as you know, they are species of reptile that they're found in rainforests and also the deserts of Africa.

And they're fascinating creatures because they have very distinctive features. They have, as you can see, telescopic eyes. They have a grasping tail and they have a projectile tongue.

But what defines and, as you know, what distinguishes the chameleon is its amazing ability to disappear. That's what defines and distinguishes the chameleon.

It's amazing ability to disappear. Because, as you know, a chameleon is able to alter and adapt their appearance so that they blend in with the background. A chameleon can imitate its environment.

It can change colour so that it becomes camouflaged in order to protect itself from predators. And the way a chameleon changes colour to suit its surroundings is actually fascinating when you stop and read about it.

[2 : 2 0] I didn't realise that the outer skin of a chameleon is actually transparent. It's see-through. So what's on the inside or what's beneath the skin is what actually allows the chameleon to alter and adapt its appearance.

Because beneath the skin of a chameleon, it has all these special cells filled with pigments. Different pigments. And these pigment cells, they allow the chameleon to change colour in order to reflect its environment and to reflect its surroundings.

So the chameleon, as you can see, it's an amazing creature. Amazing creature that the Lord has made. But you know, when you come to this passage, what Paul is clear on in the second half of Ephesians chapter 4, is that Christians are not chameleons.

Christians are not chameleons. Because Christians are not to blend into the background. Christians are not to imitate their environment. Christians are not to reflect their surroundings.

And Christians are not to change and be camouflaged like a chameleon. Christians are not chameleons. Christians are not chameleons.

[3 : 36] And I want us to think about this, this section here in Ephesians chapter 4, the second half of the chapter. I want us to think about it under two headings. Christian chameleons and Christian clothing. Christian chameleons and Christian clothing.

So first of all, Christian chameleons. Paul says there in verse 17. He says, Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds.

You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do. Last Wednesday evening, if you were here, you'll remember that we did a John Calvin.

Where like John Calvin, who picked up where he left off in his study of the book of Psalms after a three and a half year absence. We returned to our study in Ephesians. Just picking up where we left off at the end of January, five months ago.

And as we resumed our study last week, we refreshed our memories and we recalled to our minds that Paul's letter to the Ephesians, it has been split in two.

[4 : 43] It has been split into two separate sections. Out of six chapters in Ephesians, we see that the first three chapters in it, Paul is teaching.

The second three, Paul is telling. First three chapters are full of information. The second three chapters are full of application. The first three are full of indicatives. The second three are full of imperatives.

So chapters one to three, they're full of encouragements. Chapters four to six are full of exhortations. And we've seen that because Paul, he encouraged us in chapter one about all the blessings and benefits of salvation.

Then Paul encouraged us in chapter two that we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And then Paul encouraged us again in chapter three, when he reminded us about the mystery of salvation.

This mystery that has been revealed to us, that God loves us and that his love towards us is so high, you can't get over it. So low, you can't get under it.

[5 : 46] So wide, you can't get around it. Paul describes the length and breadth and depth and height of God's love towards us. So the first three chapters, they're full of encouragements.

Full of encouragements for the Christian to keep pressing on in their Christian journey. But the last three chapters, they're full of exhortations. And those exhortations, they began there in chapter four, as we recapped about the first half of chapter four, where Paul says right there at the beginning of verse one of chapter four, he says, walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

So there's your exhortation right there. As a Christian, walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. So Paul has encouraged us.

He's encouraged us by saying that we have already been called. We've been called to salvation. We've been called to salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

And how Paul says there in chapter four, he exhorts us to walk worthy of that calling. Walk worthy of your calling by walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

[7 : 00] And how Paul explains how you do that. Verse two, you're to do it with humility. You're to do it with gentleness. You're to do it with patience. We are to bear with one another in love.

We're to eagerly endeavor to keep the unity and preserve the unity and guard the unity of the spirit in our congregation. We're to walk as one united body of Christ.

Because as Paul explains there in verse four, there is one body. There's one spirit. We've been called to one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father who is over all and through all and in all.

Therefore, Paul says to us, Christian, walk worthy of your calling. And as Paul explains in the first half of chapter four, churches grow when we walk worthily together.

And churches grow when we work well together. Churches grow when we walk worthily together of our calling. And churches grow when we work well together because of our calling.

[8 : 04] And so now into the second half of chapter four. And as we'll see next week at the beginning of chapter five, Paul continues with this what you could call a peripatetic illustration.

It's an illustration of walking. He speaks about walking all the time. And that's because for Paul, our Christian walk is important.

It's integral to our witness. For Paul, our Christian walk is important and integral to our Christian witness. And, you know, we can't miss Paul's exhortation here.

Because he says there in verse one of chapter four, he says, Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. Then there in verse 17, he says, You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.

So do not walk as the Gentiles who are ignorant of grace. Then as we'll see at the beginning of chapter five, you go over the page. Chapter five, Paul tells us to walk in love as Christ has loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

[9 : 13] So we're to walk as imitators of God. So we're to walk worthy of our calling. We're not to walk as those ignorant of grace.

But we are to walk as those who are imitators of God. And, you know, we can miss Paul's exhortation because for Paul, as we said, our Christian walk is integral to our Christian witness.

Our Christian walk is integral to our Christian witness. And here, Paul, in the second half of chapter four, he warns us about our Christian walk.

He warns us about our Christian walk when he says, Now, verse 17, Now this I say, and he's so firm with us as Christians, he says, I testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds.

And, you know, Paul is clear. He's concise and he confirms that like the Gentiles, we are not to be ignorant and we are not to ignore the grace of God in our lives.

[10 : 22] We're not to turn our back or turn away from the grace of God that has worked in our heart and in our life. We're not, as Paul is explaining to us there, we are not to walk with the world and we're not to walk like the world.

And we're not to walk with the world or like the world because as Paul has encouraged us in the first half of his letter and explained to us, he has told us already that we are a people who are blessed.

We're not to walk with the world or walk like the world because we're blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. We've been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

We're loved with an everlasting love, a love that goes beyond our asking and even beyond our thinking. And so Paul says, therefore, like the Gentiles, we are not to walk like the world.

We're not to walk with the world. We're not to be ignorant. We're not to ignore the grace of God that has already been at work in our lives. And you know, he's so firm.

[11 : 31] He says, we are not to cover up or conceal or camouflage our Christian character, conduct, conversation, or commitment to Christ.

We are not to cover up or conceal or camouflage our Christian character, conduct, conversation, or commitment to Christ. In other words, Paul is saying to us, a Christian is not a chameleon.

A Christian is not a chameleon. And you know, when you read these words, and the fact that he says, I testify in the Lord, Paul's warning here is about how we walk.

And it's a stern warning. It's a serious warning. It's a solemn warning. I testify in the Lord. And his warning is there for us because our walk and our talk, as you know, it's important.

It's integral to our Christian witness. Why? Because the world is watching. The world is watching. And so Paul writes there in verse 17.

[12 : 37] He says, Paul is clear.

A Christian is not a chameleon. That's not what you've learned. That's not what I've explained in the first half of this letter. That's not the way you learned Christ. Because you have learned to live for Christ.

You have learned that in your home, and among your family, and with your friends, and at your workplace, and in your hobby spaces, you have learned that your Christian character, conduct, conversation, and commitment to Christ is crucial.

To your Christian witness. And you have learned that you are not to walk like the world, and walk with the world. And so Paul here, he said, I testify in the Lord, stop ignoring the word, and stop imitating the world.

He's so firm with us. Lovingly firm. But he says, stop ignoring the word, and stop imitating the world. Because the world is worldly.

[14 : 05] The world is worldly. And that's what Paul emphasizes. That's what he's explaining here. He says, the world is graceless, and godless. The world is vain in their views.

They're blinded in their boastfulness. This is what he goes on to say. They live for appreciation. They live for likes. They're separated from salvation. He says, they're hardened in their heart.

They're callous in their conduct. They're godless in their greed. The world is worldly, he says. And Paul says, that's not what you have learned. That's not the way you're to live your Christian life. Because a Christian is not a chameleon.

A Christian is not a chameleon. You're not to blend into the background, or imitate your environment, or reflect your surroundings. You are not to cover up, or conceal, or change, or conform, or camouflage your Christian character, conduct, conversation, or commitment to Christ.

You're not a chameleon. And you're not a chameleon, because that is not the way you learned Christ. You've been taught the truth. You've been taught the truth of what it is to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

[15 : 15] You've been taught that you're to be in the world, but not of the world. You've been taught that separation is not isolation. It's contact without contamination.

So I testify in the Lord, says Paul, you have been taught to follow in the footsteps of Christ. And you know, I always love what the evangelist D.L. Moody, he writes so many great, weak quotes.

And this is what he writes about living the Christian life. So D.L. Moody said about living the Christian life, he said, Christians should live in the world, but not be filled with it.

A ship lives in the water, but if the water gets into the ship, she goes to the bottom. So Christians may live in the world, but if the world gets into them, they sink.

That's true. If the world gets into them, they sink. So what do we do? What do we do? Well, Paul doesn't stop there. It says there in verse 22, put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God and through righteousness and holiness.

[16 : 38] And so Paul says, the answer to not being a chameleon as a Christian is put on Christian clothing. That's what we see secondly. Christian clothing.

So we see first of all Christian chameleons, and then secondly, Christian clothing. Christian clothing. Read verse 22 again. What he says there, put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God and through righteousness and holiness.

Now, as you know, and as we've said before, the second half of Paul's letter, chapters four to six, Paul moves on from teaching to telling, from information to application, from encouragement in chapters one to three, to exhortation in chapters four to six.

He moves from using indicatives. Amazing when you look at it in its original language. All indicatives in chapters one to three. Then he moves into imperatives. All these exhortations, all these commands.

And we certainly see that here as Paul, he uses a number of imperatives in this section, from verse 22 all the way down to the end of the chapter. And Paul uses all these imperatives in order to emphasize to us and explain to us our Christian clothing.

[18 : 05] Now, when I say Christian clothing, I don't mean that Paul is addressing or even admonishing Christians for wearing tight clothes and mini skirts and low-cut tops, although I'm sure he would want to address these things too.

But when I say Christian clothing, Paul isn't talking about what we wear on the outward appearance. Paul is talking about our heart and how we live our Christian life.

And with that, Paul, he exhorts us to put off and to put on. That's what he says there. That's the two imperatives. Put off and put on.

He says there, verse 22, put off your old self. Put off the old man. Put off your former way of life. Put off your graceless and godless life.

Put off the deceitful desires of your heart. Why? Because he says there, you have been renewed by the Spirit. You have been regenerated by the Spirit. You were once dead.

[19 : 04] Now you're alive in Christ. You've been regenerated by the Spirit. You've been resurrected by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he says there, verse 24, put on the new self.

Put on the new man or the new woman. Put on your new life in Christ. Put on the new life in Christ where you are being created, he says, and conformed into the likeness, verse 24, likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

My friend, that's what he says. This is your Christian clothing. This is your Christian clothing. You've been created after the likeness of God and through righteousness and holiness.

And Paul is saying to us, put off your rags and put on your robe of righteousness. Put off and put on. Put off and put on.

But Paul doesn't leave it there because in order to emphasize and explain that a Christian is not a chameleon, and he's stressing this and he keeps coming back to it. And so in order to emphasize and explain it, he says that what we have learned from Christ is that we're not to walk like the world, we're not to walk with the world.

[20 : 21] And Paul exhorts us about this by using lots and lots and lots more imperatives. He uses imperative after imperative after imperative.

Follow with me in verse 25. So verse 25, this is what Paul says. He uses the word again, therefore, so he's bringing his point. This is his application. He's given teaching.

He's now applying it. Therefore, he says, verse 25, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that I may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

[21 : 29] Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Now, it might not be as clear in English, but Paul uses 11 imperatives in these verses. Paul uses 11 imperatives in these verses.

That's 11 exhortations to put on. 11 exhortations to put on and to put off. That's 11 exhortations to walk worthily of our Christian calling in the face of a watching world.

And you'll notice that these 11 exhortations, they all relate to our walk. They all relate to our talk as a Christian, as a follower of Christ. These 11 exhortations, they all relate to our Christian character, our conduct, our conversations, and our commitment to Christ.

Because Paul exhorts us, as we read there, he exhorts us to put away, verse 25, put away falsehood, put away lying.

[22 : 48] So in other words, speak the truth. Be known as someone who always speaks the truth. And to speak the truth to your neighbour, whether that neighbour is a member in our congregation or a member in our community.

Speak the truth. Because we're not, and then he goes on to say, we're not to fall out with people, we're to control our annoyance, our anger, our animosity towards one another.

We're to tame our temper. He says there, be angry and do not sin. So do not let the sun go down on your anger. We're not to let it linger.

We're not to let it, we're not to force it to fester. Because as Paul explains, it will, verse 27, it will give only a foothold to the devil.

And the devil, as you know, he wants to bring you down. More than that, says Paul, work hard as a Christian employee. Because you're an example, not only in your home, not only in your congregation, not only in your community, you're an example in your workplace.

[23 : 52] So don't steal. Don't steal your boss's time by pretending to work and not really working. Don't steal your boss's talents. Don't take his money if you're not working for it.

Don't steal. Be honest. Be honourable in your work and in your workplace. And watch your words, he says. Verse 29, let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth.

Watch your words in your workplace. Take care of the company you keep. Mind your mouth. Tame your tongue. Use your tongue to build up, not to tear down.

That's a good one to learn. Use your tongue to build up, not to tear down. Be gracious in your speech. Because if you don't, you grieve the Holy Spirit of God whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

You'll grieve the Holy Spirit who is at work in your heart, conforming you more to Christ in your Christian character, conduct, conversation, and commitment.

[24 : 57] Therefore, says Paul, and he's so clear, he's so, you know, in many ways, I'd love to have heard him actually saying these words. So passionate. I testify in the Lord, put out, put away, put off.

Ditch it, dump it, dispose of it, disinfect yourself from all this bitterness. Down in verse 31. All bitterness, all wrath, all anger, all clamour, all slander, all gossip, all malice.

Bin it all, says Paul. Bin it all. Bin being a bitter Christian or a busybody in people's business. Get rid of gossip.

Strip yourself of slander. Free yourself of, he won't say it here, but free yourself of Facebook. Being worried about what other people think of you. Put off putting down on others because that's not the way you learned Christ.

And it's all back to that same verse, verse 20. That's not the way you learned Christ. You have learned to live for Christ. You've learned to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

[26 : 10] You've learned, as he says there, right at the end of the chapter, you've learned from the example of Christ to be kind to one another, to be tenderhearted with one another, to be forgiving with one another.

Why? Paul concludes the chapter as God and Christ forgave you. God and Christ forgave you.

You know, as a preacher and as a pastor, Paul is, you could say he's very personal, but he's also very pointed. he doesn't beat about the bush.

He doesn't shy away from being straight with people. Because for Paul, our Christian character, conduct, conversation, and commitment to Christ, it is crucial to our Christian witness.

Our Christian character, conduct, conversation, and commitment to Christ is crucial to our Christian witness. That's why Paul is so direct in these exhortations here.

[27 : 16] He's so direct with all these imperatives that we're not to walk like the world or walk with the world. We are to walk worthily of a Christian calling in the face of a watching world.

Because a Christian, says Paul, it's not a chameleon. A Christian is not a chameleon. Therefore, our Christian clothing must be that we put off the old and put on the new.

We put off the old man or woman and put on the new man and the new woman. Because as Christians, we're not to be ignorant of grace. We are, as Paul goes on to explain to us, and we'll see this next week, we're not to be ignorant of grace.

We are to be imitators of God. We're to be imitators of God. And that's what we'll see and study, God willing, next Wednesday as we meet together.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Our Father in Heaven, we give thanks for Thy Word. Thy Word, it not only encourages, but it also exhorts.

[28 : 28] It calls us and sometimes commands us so clearly and so directly to live lives that are worthy of the calling to which we have been called. And we have received a great calling, a calling from darkness into the most marvellous light of the Lord.

And help us then, we pray, to live lives worthy of that calling, to walk in the light as the Lord in the light, knowing that when we do so, we have fellowship with Thy Son and the blood of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, cleanses us from all sin.

Lord, help us, we pray, to walk as Jesus walked, to talk as Jesus talked, to be imitators of God, not ignorant of grace, to know that grace is at work in our lives and it has begun that good work and we'll bring it on to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Lord, teach us then, we pray, conform us more and more to the image of Thy Son, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen.

We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening. We're going to sing in Psalm 40. Psalm 40. It's in the Scottish Psalter, page 260.

[29 : 52] Psalm 40. We're singing from verse 9 down to the verse Mark 11. Psalm 40. And I suppose the question you should ask reading or singing these verses is who is preaching?

And the answer as is explained in the letter to the Hebrews is that Jesus is preaching. He is the one who preaches righteousness to the congregation. He is the one who has revealed himself and declared and shown his faithfulness, the faithfulness of the Lord.

So Jesus is preaching. Psalm 40 verse 9. And within the congregation great I righteousness did preach. Lo thou dost know, Lord, that I refrain not my speech.

I never did within my heart conceal thy righteousness. I thy salvation have declared and shown thy faithfulness. Thy kindness which most loving is concealed have not I nor from the congregation great have hid thy verity.

I'm saying also verse 11 of Psalm 40 to God's praise. Psalm 40 Lord, Lord, that I within let not my speech.

[31 : 43] I never did within my heart conceal thy righteousness and thy salvation have declared and shown thy faithfulness.

life Great I'll build Thy Verity Thy tender Mercies Lord From me O To The Lord Restrain

Thy Loving Kindness And Thy Truth Let Them Me Still Maintain The Grace of the Lord
Jesus Christ The love of God the Father The fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all
Now and forevermore Amen