

Eph 4:17–24 (ESV) 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. ⁽¹⁸⁾ 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. ⁽¹⁹⁾ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ⁽²⁰⁾ But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ⁽²¹⁾ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ⁽²²⁾ to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ⁽²³⁾ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ⁽²⁴⁾ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

1. Paul expects our walk to reflect what has happened to us

A. The fact that God has done radical things in us when we became his children
 1). We didn't just tack Jesus on to the old us – didn't just become a little better – more religious

B. We became a new us – the old passed away and the new has come

2 Co 5:17 (ESV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

C. We have a new nature! Not combined with the old – a composite of both – it replaces it

Rom 6:6 (NIV) For we know that *our old self was crucified with him* so that the body of sin might be done away with, *that we should no longer be slaves to sin--*

1). That old us that loved sin and hated holy ways was put to death with Christ

2). While sin is still very alive – we died to its ability to force us – we are no longer its slaves

a). We can say NO now – So Paul says - act like this has happened to you

Act like you are no longer dominated by sin – act like you've come alive to God

2. Based on who you are Paul makes the appeal of v. 17

Eph 4:17 (ESV) 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.

A. This verse introduces our passage we are studying today

1). The whole point is – a changed nature *demand*s a changed behavior

a). If you are in Christ you *MUST* no longer walk like you used too!

1a). You *MUST* no longer live like the unbeliever does

B. Can I say if you see any of these characteristics being true of you – you *MUST* deal with it

2. The outline for the next two weeks is simple

A. This week: Put off the old way of living – (4:17-19)

B. Next week: Put on the new way of living – (4:20-24)

I. PUT OFF THE OLD WAY OF LIVING

Eph 4:17–19 (ESV) 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. ⁽¹⁸⁾ 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. ⁽¹⁹⁾ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

1. Paul begins with a general exhortation

Eph 4:17 (ESV) Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do...

A. The Jews used this term “ethnos” – translated Gentiles - in two ways

1). To distinguish all other people from Jews

2). AND to distinguish all other religions from Judaism.

Point: So the term Gentiles refers racially to all non-Jews and religiously to all pagans

A. In 1 Thess 4:5 Paul uses the term to refer to those *who do not know God*

1). This is how he is using the term here – *for those who did not know God*

B. This exhortation was a necessary for these Ephesian believers

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- 1). Because they were surrounded by paganism and immorality
 - a). Ephesus was a leading given to licentiousness and lust
 - b). In fact historians said out of all the city's in Asia Ephesus was the worst when it came to sexual immorality
 - 1a). The temple to Diana was located there – one of the 7 wonders of ancient world
 - 2a). The worship of Diana was sexual in nature
 - 2). These believers in this city devoted to Diana lived under tremendous pressure to compromise
 - a). They were expected to go to the Temple – pay the temple prostitutes
And be involved in the orgies that supposedly glorified the goddess they worshipped
 - 3). Today – you don't show up to church - people concerned – encourage you to return
Then you don't show up at the orgy and people were concerned – have you backslidden?
 - a). Are you no longer devoted to the great goddess Diana?
You are inviting the wrath of God into your life – return - recommit
 - b). Perhaps at work – boss – “Haven't seen you at the orgies lately”
You refuse to return and he replaces you with one who is devoted to Diana
- C. So Paul writes to these believers who were more than likely involved in all that at one time
- 1). Believers who daily walked past places they had regularly frequented
And were probably being enticed by friends to “Come in and worship in the old ways”
 - a). Even their family would be pressuring them
 - 2). Paul exhorts them to resist
Eph 4:17 (ESV) Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do...
 - a). Interesting the way NASB puts it
Eph 4:17 (NASB) This I say therefore, *and affirm together with the Lord*, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk...
 - 1a). This is not the idea of some narrow minded – goody two-shoes preacher
It is God's standard for all who belong to him – I and the Lord affirm this!
 - 3). Peter wrote similar words to his readers – showing the pressure these believers faced
1 Pe 4:3–4 (ESV) For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. ⁽⁴⁾ With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;
 - a). Picture is of a cesspool of immorality - the believer is no longer swimming in
But those still swimming in it continuously call them to dive back in
 - b). When they don't they were mocked and ridiculed
- D. But the call to salvation is always a call away from living a worldly lifestyle
2 Co 6:16–18 (ESV) What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, ⁽¹⁸⁾ and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”
- Transition:** Paul goes on to give four characteristics of the mark out the ungodly life-style
- A. The thinking of the ungodly is characterized by futility
 - B. The ungodly life is ignorant of God's truth
 - C. The ungodly life is morally calloused
 - D. The ungodly life creates a continual lust for more sin
 - 1). Paul is painting a picture of how ridiculous it would be to know God and his truth

- a). And choose to live like this – you MUST not!

II. FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UNGODLY LIFE

First: The Thinking of The Ungodly Is Characterized by Futility

Eph 4:17 (ESV) 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*.

1. Paus says don't think like the unbeliever because:

- A. The unbeliever's mind is set upon the flesh and is hostile to God and his ways – Romans 8:7
- B. The unbeliever mind has become debased - Romans 1:28
- C. The unbeliever's mind is sensuous and defiled – Col 2:18; Titus 1:15
- D. The unbeliever doesn't understand the things of God – 1 Cor 2:14

Point: Therefore you cannot think this way and live a life that is pleasing to God

- A. Why? Because your thinking will always determine how you live
 - 1). If you love sin – you will hate the God that stands in sins way
 - 2). If you want to fulfill the desires of the flesh – you will hate the truth that says don't do that
 - 3). If the world is what attracts you – and God says “Set your mind on things above NOT on the things of the earth” – there is going to be conflict

Transition: Paul is arguing - that this kind of thinking can never lead to satisfaction – it leads to “Futility”

3. Futility defined: That which fails to produce the desired results

- A. The Greek word for futility is interesting – *Mataiotēs* - was a synonym for emptiness
 - 1). Unbelievers think sin will bring satisfaction – materialism fulfillment - Self-will contentment
 - 2). Paul says that will only lead to futility – to emptiness
 - a). Isn't that what Solomon said – the man who had it all – held nothing back from himself

Ec 1:2 (ESV) Vanity of vanities, *All is vanity*.

Point: Believer aim higher – set your sight on what can bring lasting joy and satisfaction

- A. Pursue God! Cry out that you would have the heart of David who said...
Ps 42:1 (ESV) As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.

4. So Paul starts with the mind – don't think like the world

- A. Be intentional – direct your thoughts to what matters – put what is healthy into it
Ro 12:2 (ESV) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
 - 1). The world is always exerting pressure on us to be conformed into its ways
The way to stop that – push back by inputting God's word
 - a). Drive away the futility with truth so important because
Your living will always reflect your thinking
Your thinking will always reflect what's being input

Transition: The ungodly are driven by a mind that is futile – which lead to emptiness

- A. Why is that true? Why would the thinking be so twisted – next point

Second: The Ungodly Life is Ignorant of God's Truth

Eph 4:18 (ESV) 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.

1. The Greeks were proud about their learning – known as great thinkers

- A. They were skilled in science, technology, literature, and art

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- 1). To be thought of as ignorant in Greek society was a great insult
 - B. But that is exactly what Paul was saying here
 - 1). They may have been skilled in the sciences – incredible artists – poets
 - 2). But when it came to that which was most important – things of God - they were ignorant
 - 3). ***Why were they ignorant of spiritual things – because they didn't want to see!***
Ro 1:18–19 (ESV) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness ***suppress the truth.*** ⁽¹⁹⁾ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.
 - a). God's truth is available to all – but the ungodly choose to suppress it
 - 1a). They would rather believe a lie so they can hang on to their sin
 - C. Paul says the result is a horrifying darkness that keeps them alienated from God
 - 1). They don't want to know the truth – the gospel - that tells them how to be right with him
 - Thought:** This is heartbreaking – horrifying
 - A. Paul says they are hardened towards God – their eyes are closed to his love
 - 1). They are determined to cling to their sin – and if they persist they will die without a Savior
- 2. The danger here is incalculable – word for hardness is an interesting one**
- A. **Pōrōsis** = carries the idea of being rock-hard
 - 1). But it is a hardness that occurs over time
 - a). Doctors used it to describe the calcification that forms around broken bones
And over time becomes harder than the bone itself
 - b). It was also used of the hard formations that sometimes occur in joints
Eventually causing them to become immobile - paralyzed
 - Point:** Why does the Spirit choose this word? To show the danger of clinging to sin
 - A. There is a hardness towards God that is happening
 - 1). Slowly but surely you are moving towards an inability to respond to him
 - B. The danger is that eventually God - in a judicial act – may seal you in that hardness
 - 1). It is a spiritually devastating one-two punch – you become hard – God makes that eternal
- 2. The danger of persisting in your own way**
- A. The danger is a divine judicial hardening – where God quits trying to reach you
 - 1). Listen to what John says about the Jews who rejected God's Word – who saw Jesus himself
TURN: Jn 12:37–40 (ESV) Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, ⁽³⁸⁾ so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” ⁽³⁹⁾ ***Therefore they could not believe.*** For again Isaiah said, ⁽⁴⁰⁾ ***“He (God) has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart,*** lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.”
 - a). They had crossed that line – they had said “no” so many times they couldn't say yes
 - b). They would not believe and eventually they could not believe
 - 1a). They were alive – breathing – but their fate was sealed!
 - B. We have this again in 2 Thessalonians
2 Th 2:9–12 (ESV) The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ⁽¹⁰⁾ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because ***they refused to love the truth and so be saved.*** ⁽¹¹⁾ ***Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false,*** ⁽¹²⁾ in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.
 - 1). Radical! You clung to a lie – eventually God says “Fine. You will die believing that lie.”

- a). How foolish to toy with sin – thinking “On my deathbed I’ll make it right”
It may be over long before your death bed
A. W. Pink: What insanity is it that persuades multitudes to defer the effort to repent till their death-beds? Do they imagine that when they are so weak that they can no longer turn their bodies they will have strength to turn their souls from sin? Far sooner could they turn themselves back to perfect physical health.
- 2). Have people been saved on death beds - YES – but the vast majority are not
- C. When God stops reaching out to you – you’re through
- 1). There is a great cost of rejecting the light – It can be turned off forever
- 2). You never know when that NO to Christ could be the last one
That NO where God says I will never approach you again – your fate is sealed
- Point:** If you’ve been saved your life should look radically different
- A. You should be becoming more and more enlightened in your understanding
AND more and more alive to God
- 1). You should be growing in your ability and desire to say YES to him – NOT NO!
- 2). Your heart should be becoming softer not harder
- Transition:** Paul not through with this idea of hardness – he adds to this thought in v. 19
- A. How you can tell you’re heading in this direction

Third: The Ungodly Are Spiritually and Morally Calloused

Eph 4:19 (ESV) They have become callous...

Eph 4:19 (NIV) Having lost all sensitivity...

Eph 4:19 (NLT) They don't care anymore about right and wrong...

1. When you choose to pursue the emptiness of a life without God

- A. When you persist in going your own way
- B. Eventually you become so hardened (the last point) – RESULT: You just don’t care!
- 1). This is what the Scripture calls a seared conscience – hardened scarred
- a). You choose to suppress your conscience – override it – eventually you can silence it
- Thought:** You come to a point you couldn’t care less – no fear of God – no fear of hell
- A. You hear these truths that God may not approach you any longer – So what!
- B. Again - he danger of saying “no” - every “no” turns the volume of the conscience down a bit more
- 1). Eventually the conscience is silenced – you sin with no inner warning at all – no inner resistance
- John MacArthur (The vanishing conscience):** In 1984 an Avianca Airlines jet crashed in Spain. Investigators studying the accident made an eerie discovery. The “black box” cockpit recorders revealed that several minutes before impact a shrill, computer-synthesized voice from the plane’s automatic warning system told the crew repeatedly in English, “Pull up! Pull up!”
- The pilot, evidently thinking the system was malfunctioning, snapped, “Shut up, Gringo!” and switched the system off. Minutes later the plane plowed into the side of a mountain. Everyone on board died.
- a). God has given a internal warning system – meant to produce guilt – to warn
- 1a). When we silence it – we head into destruction with no sense of doom
- C. Let me say this - If you are here – or listening on line – or download this (all over the world)
- 1). If this is bothering you – if you still feel any tug towards God - hallelujah
- a). You MUST respond while that tug is still sensed
- Heb 3:15 (ESV)** As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...”
- 2 Co 6:2 (ESV)** ...behold, now is the day of salvation.

- 2). There is an urgency! Oh I know “You’ll do it tomorrow” but tomorrow never comes
 - a). One writer said "Too late" is written on the gates of hell
 - 1a). Many inhabitants there had planned on trusting Christ tomorrow

Thought: Paul says to the believer don’t be like that

- A. Keep your conscience tender – sensitive to the Lord – it is given as a friend treat it as such
 - 1). I have talked to believers who have sinned so repeatedly in an area

They say there so afraid because there seems to be no fight any longer – they just sin

 - a). They are concerned about their salvation – terrible place to be
- B. This all leads to this last characteristic

Transition: This shows the end of this ungodly mindset – the plummet into darkness

Fourth: The Ungodly Life Creates a Continual Lust For More Sin

Eph 4:19 (ESV) ... (they) have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

1. Sensuality refers to total licentiousness

- A. The absence of any moral restraint, especially in the area of sexual sins.
 - 1). The idea is that of unbridled self-indulgence and undisciplined obscenity
 - B. The conscience no longer warns them – there is no longer any internal resistance
 - 1). Now their desire for sinful things has grown into a greediness for sinful things
 - 2). Their desire for certain sins now is a lust for every kind of impurity
 - a). Just the way it is – the sin of yesterday no longer thrills you today

You go deeper and deeper into the darkness

Eph 4:19 (NIV) Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in *every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*

 - 1a). Now the desire for sin is continuous – it dominates – it controls
- Thought:** This person so driven by lust – sexual – material – lust for power and position
They are willing to do things they know could destroy everything
- A. They will put their careers – family – reputation – everything on the line for sin
 - 1). Sin is the master now – and it will have its way

CONCLUSION

1. Brothers and sisters none of this should be seen in your life

- A. This is the lifestyle of those who hate God not those who love him

This is what characterizes the children of the devil (John 8) not the children of God
- B. If you see yourselves in any of this – don’t dismiss it lightly – get to God – repent cry out for help
 - 1). But I’ll finish with the words of Hebrews

Heb 6:9 (NIV) Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case--things that accompany salvation.

 - a). We will look at these better things next week