

064 - No Longer Walk As the Others - Ephesians 4:17-20 - 2015-10-18

Call to Worship: Psalm 47:6-8

Scripture Reading: Leviticus 18:24-30

Sermon: "No Longer Walk As the Others" Ephesians 4:17-20

Benediction: 1 John 1:7

## INTRODUCTION

I am grateful to the Lord for how He has helped us. We started into Ephesians 4 on May 31st this year. Maybe you remember me saying this:

I think this is going to be somewhat difficult

I think this is going to be somewhat painful

I think this is going to be somewhat humiliating

You know what's coming, don't you?

Wives, you will be told to submit to your husbands as unto the Lord

Husbands, you will be told to die to yourself for the sake of your wife, as Christ has done for the church.

Children, you will be told to obey your parents.

But all of that isn't even until near the end of chapter 5 and the beginning of chapter 6.

There is a lot of hard, painful, humiliating work to be done before we even get there!

But, oh, I think it is going to be very, very good.

I think it is a great privilege to be in this situation.

I think this is just what I have needed, for my own sake, for my family's sake, for the good of the church.

I think this is just what is needed by the unbelieving sinners around us---to see us brought to where we walk in the way of the Lord.

Now we have labored together all summer on the matter of Ephesians 4:1-16. God has granted you patience to listen as I have discoursed from the scriptures on the unity of the church, including the six sermons on baptism. You have borne with me through 11 sermons on the building up of the church to maturity.

I am very thankful for all of this. The bible warns us that the time will come when people will no longer listen to sound doctrine, but will gather to themselves teachers who will say what their ears are itching to hear. But at this time in this congregation the Lord is granting such a

dispensation of His grace that the preachers are willing to speak according to the pattern of sound words laid down by the apostles and the church is willing to listen to it, taking it for the word of God, which is what it is.

We're today into a new section. We're still in the larger section begun in Ephesians 4:1, in which we are commanded and taught to "walk worthy of the high calling" we have received. But we have concluded the section on keeping the unity of the church, and are passing into the section where our personal moral conduct is more directly addressed. We're going to hear very direct, detailed commands like

"put away lying"

"let him who stole steal no longer"

"let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth"

But to get us ready for that, we have a few verses explaining in general what will then be expounded in detail.

We hear today that **Because of what the Lord has done for us, we should no longer walk as the gentiles walk.**

TEXT

Ephesians 4:17-20 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, (18) having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; (19) who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (20) But you have not so learned Christ,

## BODY

- I. Our attention is re-focused 17a
  - A. "This I say"
  - B. therefore
    1. recall this principle: what we are commanded to do is based on what the God has done for us in the Lord Jesus and by His Holy Spirit
    2. there are many things God has done for us; the one just mentioned is that the Lord Jesus Christ has given us gifts by which we may know the word of God and by that Word be built up from children to the full stature of Christ
    3. before that was all the doctrine of how God has saved us by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and the work of the Holy Spirit in us who were dead in sins to bring us new life in Christ
  - C. and testify in the Lord
    1. he would have us know that he is speaking as one testifying to the truth
    2. he is speaking as one whose speech is the word of the Lord Jesus Christ
  - D. APPLICATION: What would God have me to do? What should I do?
    1. I am having trouble with my kids (or with my parents)
    2. I am having trouble with my husband or wife
    3. I am having trouble with my job or business
    4. my temper
    5. my tongue
    6. lustful thoughts
    7. outbursts of anger
    8. Here comes the very word of God to tell you what to do
- II. A pattern for our instruction is set: "not this, but that" (no longer walk as . . . ) 17b
  - A. This is the very way the Lord Jesus taught us.
  - B. Let it be made clear to you how things used to be with you
    1. understand it
    2. be reminded of it
  - C. Let it be made clear to you how things are in the world around you
  - D. Consider that because you used to be this way, there is temptation from within to keep acting this way
  - E. Consider that because the world around you still lives this way, there is temptation from without to keep acting this way
  - F. So the pattern for our instruction is, "not like this, but like that"
- III. The prohibition is issued: You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds (peek to verse 23 to see the second half)
  - A. The command is that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do; but in what sense?
    1. the Gentiles go to work---don't do that?

2. the Gentiles buy houses to live in---don't do that?
  3. the Gentiles write books and read books---don't do that?
- B. You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in that they walk in the futility or vanity of their minds
1. the desires of their flesh make them want to sin, both in failing to love God and in failing to love other people; meanwhile, the lies of the devil try to make them think sin is not sin
  2. so they need to think about these things and come to right conclusions about sin, righteousness, God, the devil, judgment, heaven, hell, and all such things
  3. but when they think, their thinking does not produce what is true as to religion, as to worship of God
  4. and when they think, but their thinking does not produce what is good as to morals, as to doing right instead of wrong
  5. they think about these things, and when they have thought, they are no better off than before they thought, because nothing right or good has been thought
  6. so, then, as a result of their futile or vain thinking, they speak and act in ways that are evil, doing no more than following the sinful urges of their flesh and believing the devil's lies that what they are doing is okay
- C. The command of the Lord to us is that we must no longer walk like that, as the Gentiles do in the futility of their mind
- IV. The evil condition of the Gentiles is observed
- A. their understanding is darkened v. 18
1. 1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.
  2. As if they are without light
- B. they are alienated from the life of God v. 18
1. because of their ignorance
    - a) which is because of hardness or blindness of heart
- C. they are past feeling v. 19
1. the idea is that they are calloused in conscience (faculty of knowing right from wrong, truth from falsehood)
  2. we observe the things that people around us do, and we think, "Don't you feel that?"
    - a) e.g. the hidden camera videos of Planned Parenthood officials talking about salvaging body parts from aborted babies
    - b) e.g. recently a new Secretary of the Army was nominated, and he is openly a sodomite
    - c) these things sting my conscience; but there are many gentiles who conscience is calloused in these areas; they don't feel the sting anymore

- D. they have given themselves over to sin
  - 1. they are not fighting, they have joined up!
  - 2. to work all uncleanness
    - a) along with covetousness
  - 3. note that hardly anyone gives himself over entirely; he is restrained by self interest, knowing that the highest degree of self-indulgence hurts
    - a) by it he can lose favor with those whose favor he values
      - (1) his friends
      - (2) his family
      - (3) his employer
      - (4) his customers
    - b) by it he can run afoul of the civil law

E. APPLICATION

- 1. You who have not trusted yourself to Christ, do you realize this is where you are headed?
  - a) repent before it is too late!
- 2. Accept this analysis of how bad sin is
  - a) no truce with your flesh---it is to be mortified
  - b) no friendship with the world---that is hatred toward God
  - c) in the world, but not of it

V. Our contrast with the Gentiles v. 20

A. our understanding is no longer darkened

- 1. Matthew 4:16 THE PEOPLE WHO SAT IN DARKNESS HAVE SEEN A GREAT LIGHT, AND UPON THOSE WHO SAT IN THE REGION AND SHADOW OF DEATH LIGHT HAS DAWNED."
- 2. 2 Corinthians 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

B. we are not alienated from the life of God

- 1. Colossians 1:21-22 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled (22) in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight--

C. we are not past feeling

- 1. In my inmost man I delight in the law of God
- 2. And so I hate sin, especially the remaining sin in me
- 3. When I do sin, I hate it; I mourn over it; I plead with God both to forgive me and to help me to put to death that sin

D. we have not given ourselves over to lewdness

- 1. rather, there is a war on, the Holy Spirit in us waging war against our flesh
- 2. we are working to put the flesh to death
- 3. we are striving to make no provision for the lusts of the flesh

E. all of this is because of the grace of God, by which he works powerfully in us

- F. and so we are not like the gentiles
  - 1. not like we used to be
  - 2. not like the world around us
- G. therefore since we are not like them, let us not walk like them

## CONCLUSION

We are about to get down to the nitty-gritty of the Christian life, being taught in detail what the Lord's will is for us to do and not to do. But let us get firmly in mind this broader principle: Because of what the Lord Jesus has done for us, we are no longer like the gentiles---not like we used to be, and not like the world around us---therefore **let us no longer walk as the gentiles walk, in the futility of their minds!**

JRY:

Normally we can see where we are walking, or where we are driving. But sometimes something happens to make you not be able to see where you are going.

dark and the normal artificial lights are not available

rainstorm, snowstorm, sandstorm

fog, smoke

eyes closed or blindfolded for the purpose of playing a certain game

birth defect, accident, or illness that makes you actually blind

JRY:

true the world around you is that way

true you yourself were born that way, and for a long time were that way

but you who have been brought to repentance from sin and faith in Christ no longer are that way

Bayne:

Verses 17-25

1. He maketh a preface, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord"
  - a. an assertion "I say and testify"
  - b. the manner of it "in the Lord"
    - i. in the name or authority
    - ii. in the presence
    - iii. by virtue and strength ministered from the Lord
2. He layeth down the precept.
  - a. generally: "walk not as other Gentiles"

3. He giveth a reason
  - a. such as are unlike, their conversation must be unlike

The general negative precept is, that they should “not walk as other Gentiles”

### **This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord**

Ellicott:

The phrase “This I say” seems to be used by St. Paul in returning (so to speak) from some lofty aspiration or profound reasoning, in which some might not be able to follow him, to a solid, practical ground, which all may tread. (See, for example, 1Co\_15:50.)

JRY:

A few days ago I was angry in the evening at someone in my own family. I was very tempted just to stay angry. I heard in my mind the words of the bible telling me not to be angry, but I was not moved by that. I finally was moved when it occurred to me that it was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself telling me that.

Hodge:

having in the preceding section taught that Christ had destined his church to perfect conformity to himself, and made provision for that end, the apostle enjoins on Christians to live in accordance with this high vocation. “This *therefore* I say”

“in the Lord” means in communion with the Lord. Paul sapeks as one who had access to the mind of CHrist, knew his will, and ouclد therefore speak in his name.

Henry:

that is, seeing the matter is as above described, seeing you are members of Christ's body and partakers of such gifts, this I urge upon your consciences, and bear witness to as your duty in the Lord's name, and by virtue of the authority I have derived from him.

JFB:

resuming the exhortation which he had begun with, “I therefore beseech you that ye walk worthy,” etc. (Eph\_4:1)

Wesley:

He returns thither where he begun, Eph\_4:1

### **no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk**

Hodge:

not only the visible deportment characteristic of the Gentiles, but also the inward life of which the outward deportment is the manifestation

### **in the futility [KJV vanity] of their mind**

Bayne:



that is, in vain conversations, which their minds teach and advise

Hodge:

the unity of the soul which forbids any marked distinction between its cognitive and emotional faculties, i.e. between the understanding and the heart

The mind, therefore, in the passage before us, does not refer to the intellect to the exclusion of the feelings, nor to the feelings to the exclusion of the intellect. It includes both . . . the whole soul is intended.

The apostle conceives of the heathen as men whose minds are impaired or darkened, and therefore they are ignorant.

Darkness of mind is the cause of ignorance, ignorance and consequent obduracy of heart are the cause of alienation from God. This is both the logical and theological order of sequence.

The soul in its natural state cannot discern the things of God — therefore it does not know them, therefore the heart is hard and therefore it is destitute of holiness. This is what the apostle teaches in 1Co\_2:14, 1Co\_2:16.

### **what is the right relationship among the four things mentioned in verse 18**

NKJV

Ephesians 4:18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

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.

Bayne:

1. their blindness
2. their estrangement from the life of God
  - a. amplified from the cause, ignorance
    - i. the fountain of that opened, hardness of heart
3. their dedolency
4. their flagitious life, which are things following one another

Ignorance doth keep us in death from having fellowship with God and his life  
observe what is the cause which keepeth us in blindness, even the hardness of heart

Hodge:

Darkness of mind is the cause of ignorance, ignorance and consequent obduracy of heart are the cause of alienation from God. This is both the logical and theological order of sequence.

Carroll:

- he starts with spiritual ignorance
- that produces vanity of mind, darkness of understanding, and alienation from the life of God
- then evil practice hardens the heart until we lose sensitiveness to right and wrong, become past feeling
- so that the whole life is surrendered to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness

### **having their understanding darkened**

Hodge:

in this case it means the intelligence

### **being alienated from the life of God**

Hodge:

spiritual life . . . of which the indwelling Spirit is the principle or source

### **because of the ignorance that is in them**

### **because of the blindness of their heart**

Hodge:

more properly means hardness

### **who, being past feeling**

Hodge:

The practical proof of their being in the state described is to be found in the fact that being without feeling they give themselves over to the sins mentioned

Conscience ceases to upbraid or to restrain them. They, therefore, give themselves up to excess, to practice all kinds of uncleanness

### **have given themselves over to lewdness**

Hodge:

Conscience ceases to upbraid or to restrain them. They, therefore, give themselves up to excess, to practice all kinds of uncleanness

### **to work all uncleanness with greediness**

Hodge:

covetousness

The heathen give themselves up to uncleanness and covetousness. These two vices are elsewhere thus associated, as in Eph\_5:3, Eph\_5:5, "Let not uncleanness or covetousness be named among you." "No unclean person, nor covetous man, etc." See also Col\_3:5; Rom\_1:29; 1Co\_5:10.

Here as in Rom\_1:24, immorality is connected with impiety as its inevitable consequence. Men in their folly think that morality may be preserved without religion, and even that morality is religion; but reason, experience and Scripture all prove that if men do not love and fear God they give themselves up to vice in some form, and commonly either to uncleanness or avarice.

There is a twofold reason for this; one is the nature of the soul which has no independent source of goodness in itself, so that if it turns from God it sinks into pollution, and the other is the punitive justice of God. He abandons those who abandon him

In Rom\_1:24 and elsewhere, it is said 'God gives the impious up to uncleanness;' here it is said, they give themselves up. These are only different forms of the same truth. Men are restrained from evil by the hand of God, if he relaxes his hold they rush spontaneously to destruction. All systems of education, all projects of reform in social or political life, not founded in religion, are, according to the doctrine of this passage and of all Scripture, sure to lead to destruction.

### **But you have not so learned Christ**

Hodge:

That is, your knowledge of Christ has not led you to live as the heathen.

the Scriptures speak of preaching Christ, which does not mean merely to preach his doctrines, but to preach Christ himself, to set him forth as the object of supreme love and confidence, so "to learn Christ" does not mean merely, to learn his doctrines, but to attain the knowledge of Christ as the Son of God, God in our nature, the Holy One of God, the Savior from sin, whom to know is holiness and life. Any one who has thus

learned Christ cannot live in darkness and sin. Such knowledge is in its very nature light. Where it enters, the mind is irradiated, refined, and purified

Calvin:

That those to whom the vanity of the senses is a rule of life, should yield themselves up to base lusts, is not surprising; but the doctrine of Christ teaches us to renounce our natural dispositions. He whose life differs not from that of unbelievers, has learned nothing of Christ; for the knowledge of Christ cannot be separated from the mortification of the flesh.