
The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XCVI : LIVING OUT OUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST IN OUR CHURCHES (4:17-5:2)

Ephesians 4:17 ~ 19 —

This I saye therefore and testifie in the lorde that ye hence forth walke not as other gentylys walke in vanitie of their mynde blynded in their vnderstandynge beyng straungers from the lyfe which is in god thorow the ignorancy that is in them because of the blyndnes of their hertes: which beyng past repentaunce have geuen them selves vnto wantannes to worke all manner of vnclennes even with gredynes. (Tyndale's New Testament, 1524)

This I say therefore and testifie in the Lord, that yee hencefoorth walke not as other Gentiles walke, in vanitie of their minde, Hauing their vnderstanding darkened, and being strangers from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardnesse of their heart: Which being past feeling, haue giuen themselues vnto wantonnesse, to woorke all vnclennesse, euen with griedinesse. (Geneva Bible, 1599)

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (King James Version, 1769)

This, then, I say, and I testify in the Lord; ye are no more to walk, as also the other nations walk, in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in the understanding, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart, who, having ceased to feel, themselves did give up to the lasciviousness, for the working of all uncleanness in greediness; (Young's Literal Translation, 1898)

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (Revised Version, 1885)

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (American Standard Version, 1901)

Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live 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 their hardness of heart; they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness. (Revised Standard Version, 1952)

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, 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; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (New King James Version, 1982)

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. (New American Standard Version, 1995)

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed. (New International Version, 2011)

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 their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. (English Standard Version, 2011)

This, therefore, I am saying and solemnly declaring in the Lord, that no longer are you to be ordering your behavior as the Gentiles order their behavior in the futility of their mind, being those who have their understanding darkened, who have been alienated from the life of God through the ignorance which is in them, through the hardening of their hearts, who, being of such a nature as to have become callous, abandoned themselves to wantonness, resulting in a performing of every uncleanness in the

sphere of greediness. (Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation, 1961)

Τοῦτο οὖν λέγω καὶ μαρτύρομαι ἐν κυρίῳ, μηκέτι ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καθὼς καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἔθνη περιπατεῖ ἐν ματαιότητι τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν ἐσκοτισμένοι τῇ διανοίᾳ ὄντες ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν τὴν οὖσαν ἐν αὐτοῖς διὰ τὴν πώρωσιν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν οἵτινες ἀπηληγότες ἑαυτοὺς παρέδωκαν τῇ ἀσελείᾳ εἰς ἐργασίαν ἀκαθαρσίας πάσης ἐν πλεονεξίᾳ (Stephanus Greek NT, 1550)

Τοῦτο οὖν λέγω καὶ μαρτύρομαι ἐν κυρίῳ, μηκέτι ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν, καθὼς καὶ τὰ ἔθνη περιπατεῖ ἐν ματαιότητι τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν, ἐσκοτωμένοι τῇ διανοίᾳ ὄντες, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν τὴν οὖσαν ἐν αὐτοῖς, διὰ τὴν πώρωσιν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν, οἵτινες ἀπηληγότες ἑαυτοὺς παρέδωκαν τῇ ἀσελείᾳ εἰς ἐργασίαν ἀκαθαρσίας πάσης ἐν πλεονεξίᾳ. (NA28 Greek New Testament)

Exhortation to Live According to the New Humanity Rather Than the Old (4:17-24)

this pericope contains two major exhortations — the first is a negative: do not live like the Gentiles (vv 17-19; first sentence)

¹⁷ 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.

negative depiction of Gentile living, organized around three perfect participles (a verbal adjective):

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.

the second exhortation is a positive: but live according to Christ's commands (vv 20-24; second sentence)

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,

three phrases describing the ethical conduct of Christian living, organized around three infinitives ('to' + verb, allowing the verb to be used as a noun, adjective or adverb):

²² **to put off** your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is being corrupted through lusts that come from deceit,

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 righteousness and holiness that comes from the truth.

Practical Injunctions About the Old and New Life (4:25 – 5:2)

negatively ...

positively ...

motivational clause

lying ²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, ...
... let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, ...
... for we are members one of another.

anger ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; ...
... do not let the sun go down on your anger, ...
²⁷ ... and give no opportunity to the devil.

stealing ²⁸ 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.

evil talk ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, ...
... but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, ...
... that it may give grace to those who hear.

[possibly major motivation for all the preceding injunctions] ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

negative features associated with anger ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice...
³² ... Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, ...
... as God in Christ forgave you.

[positive exhortation] ¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

[positive exhortation with motivational clause] ² And walk in love, ...
... as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THIS SECTION — *“This passage, as a piece of direct exhortation about both what is inappropriate and what is appropriate to the believer’s calling, continues the address to the readers begun in 4:1-3. God’s calling of these particular readers has taken them out of their previous situation as Gentiles, with all the negative connotations [Paul] has attached to that identification, into a new creation in which ethnic differences are no longer the significant factor, into a body which transcends the Jew-Gentile divide (cf. chap. 2). Now they must walk worthily of such a calling by no longer living as they did before the call took effect, by no longer living as Gentiles. The positive side of [Paul’s] exhortation to appropriate conduct appeals to the tradition of teaching the readers have received, and particularly those aspects of the tradition that have ethical implications. This concern has been prepared for in the preceding passage, not only through the notion of living worthily of the calling but also through the importance attached to those ministers whose task is to pass on the apostolic tradition and thereby enable the Church to grow into maturity.”* [Lincoln, 289]

CONNECTIONS WITH WHAT PAUL WRITES ELSEWHERE IN EPHESIANS — Paul’s focus on the new life in Christ is related to things he has written in the first half of the letter. In 2:1-10 specifically the lives (‘walk’) of unbelievers are contrasted, much in the same manner as here. In 2:11-22 Paul spoke of the Gentile’s former life outside of Christ, and their having been brought into a new relationship through the work of Christ. In 3:2-13 Paul speaks of the outsider Gentiles were brought into the one body of our churches, on an even level with Jewish believers (‘joint-heirs, joint-body, and joint-partakers’). The Gentiles were ‘dead’ (2:1,5) and ‘without God’ (2:12), conditions summed up in the phrase ‘separated from the life of God’ (4:18). ‘Evil desires’ characterized their former way of life (2:3; 4:22). The believer however is presented in terms of a ‘new creation’ (2:10; 4:24). The terminology of ‘new person’, used in 2:15 corporately, returns in 4:24. Paul speaks of holiness as being one of the results of the believer’s election (1:4), the practical exhortations of which may be found in 4:20-24. These believers are those who have ‘heard the word of truth’ (1:13), the teaching of which is the basis of our living new lives in Christ (2:21). The presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers (1:13,14) is reaffirmed (2:22). Excessive anger is something that gives the devil a base of operations (4:27) which anticipates the spiritual warfare theme mentioned later by Paul (6:10-20). [Lincoln, 274f; Best, 414f; Arnold, 296]

PARALLEL THOUGHTS IN ROMANS AND COLOSSIANS — Paul repeats the thoughts written here in various other portions of the New Testament. One of the most striking parallels is found between 4:17-19 and Romans 1:21,24:

Romans 1:21-32: *‘because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful, who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.’* (NKJV)

<i>they became <u>futile</u> in their thinking</i> (Rom 1:21)	<i>in the <u>futility</u> of their minds</i> (Eph 4:17c)
<i>their foolish hearts were <u>darkened</u></i> (Rom 1:21)	<i>They are <u>darkened</u> in their understanding</i> (Eph 4:18a)
<i>God gave them up ... to <u>impurity</u></i> (Rom 1:24)	<i>have given themselves up ... greedy to practice every kind of <u>impurity</u></i> (Eph 4:19)

Another passage with strong parallels is Colossians 3:5-10:

Colossians 3:5-11: *‘Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.’* (NKJV)

<i>sexual immorality, <u>impurity</u>, passion, evil <u>desire</u>, and <u>covetousness</u>, which is idolatry</i> (Col 3:5)	<i>for the working of all <u>uncleanness</u> in <u>greediness</u></i> (Eph 4:19)
	<i>is corrupt through deceitful <u>desires</u></i> (Eph 4:22)
<i>In these you too once <u>walked</u></i> (Col 3:7)	<i>that you must no longer <u>walk</u> as the Gentiles do</i> (Eph 4:17)

but now put off... (Col 3:8)
you have put off the old self with its practices (Col 3:9)
have put on the new self (Col 3:10)
being renewed in knowledge (Col 3:10)
after the image of him that created him (Col 3:10)

to put off your old self, which belongs to your former
manner of life (Eph 4:22)
and to put on the new self (Eph 4:24)
to be renewed in the spirit of your minds (Eph 4:23)
created after the likeness of God (Eph 4:24)

PAUL'S FORM OF ARGUMENT HERE IS COMMON AMONG JEWS AS WELL AS CHRISTIANS — Jewish writers regularly summoned their fellow Jews not to live like the Gentiles; for example:

'And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them.' (Lev 20:23)

'When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations.' (Deut 18:9)

"Small groups facing a hostile, or even a mainly neutral, culture find it important to define the type of conduct their members should display. Since it is usually easier to do this negatively by stating what the group rejects in the world around it, small groups normally stress the negative aspects. This was the position of the Jews in the ancient world where their Law and customs held them together; so the Pharisees regarded the Law as a fence protecting their way of life. It should be no surprise then to find strong negative features in [Paul's] paraenesis. But the negative by itself is inadequate; there is a distinctive and positive Christian way of life and [Paul] sets this out. In expressing both the negative and positive aspects he uses traditional paraenetical material, mostly drawn from Judaism, but material which was not out of accord with the teaching of many pagan moral philosophers. From the beginning the church had instructed its members in how to live and, since Christianity came out of a Jewish cradle, much of what was taught was similar to Jewish instruction; this may not have been needed for the first converts from Judaism but was very necessary when the majority of those entering the church came from the Gentile world." [Best, 415f] "The portrayal of the mind-set and lifestyle of the Gentiles that Paul delivers in this section is similar to the descriptions found in Jewish writings, such as Wisdom of Solomon 12 -15 (see also Dead Sea Scrolls 1QS 3-4), a text that may have influenced Paul's indictment of the sinfulness of Gentiles in Rom 1:18-32. Paul repeats and develops many of the same ideas here, such as: their meaningless way of thinking (Rom 1:21), their darkened hearts (1:21), their ignorance of God and his mercy (2:4), their impurity (1:24), their greed (1:29), and their giving themselves over to an impure lifestyle (expressed in Romans by the idea of 'exchanged'; 1:23, 25, 26)." [Arnold, 281; see also Best, 417; Lincoln, 271f, 277; O'Brien, 318f]

RELATED TO EARLY BAPTISMAL CATECHESIS? — While not common in today's Baptist churches, it was common in the early churches to have oral religious instruction (*'catechesis'*) prior to baptism. Three features which parallels this passage especially stand out:

- the imagery of the new life entered upon through conversion and baptism; cp. 4:24
- a statement of the need to abandon the characteristics of the old life, often using the verbiage *'to put away, to put off'*; cp. 4:22
- often accompanied by the mention of vices to be put away and the virtues to be acquired; cp. vv. 19, 22, 24 [Lincoln, 272]

While Baptists pride themselves in their attempt to be *'Biblical'* and not bound by *'traditions'*, these teachings could certainly not do any harm.

v. 17 — This, therefore, — Τοῦτο οὖν [touto oun] — 'RESUMING WHAT I BEGAN IN 4:1-3, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THIS ...' — *The initial 'this' points forward, not backwards, and refers to the content of the exhortation that follows. Note it is singular, giving a sense of unity and emphasis to the admonitions;* cp. 3:8; 5:5; 1 Cor 7:29; 1 Thess 4:15. [Best, 416; Lincoln, 276; Eadie, 326f; Lange's, 160] *Paul immediately adds 'therefore', not to draw any conclusion from what precedes but resuming what he began in the beginning of the chapter:*

'I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.... This, therefore, are some of the ways in which we walk worthy of that calling with which we were called

"The Bible was written to be obeyed, and not simply studied, and this is why the words 'therefore' and 'wherefore' are repeated so often in the second half of Ephesians (4:1, 17, 25; 5:1, 7, 14, 17, 24). Paul was saying, 'Here is what Christ has done for you. Now, in the light of this, here is what we ought to do for Christ.' We are to be doers of the Word, and not hearers only (James 1:22). The fact that we have been called in Christ (Eph. 1:18) ought to motivate us to walk in unity (Eph. 4:1-16). And the fact that we have been raised from the dead (Eph. 2:1-10) should motivate us to walk in purity (Eph. 4:17-5:17), or, as Paul told the Romans, 'walk in newness of life' (Rom. 6:4). We are alive in Christ, not dead in sins; therefore 'put off the old man ... and put on the new man' (Eph. 4:22, 24). Take off the graveclothes and put on the grace-clothes!" [Wiersbe, 39; see also Best, 416; Lincoln, 276; Arnold, 280; O'Brien, 319; Lange's, 160; Muddiman, 210; Bruce, 354] "The 'therefore' refers

back to what Paul has been saying about our high calling in Jesus Christ. Because we are called to salvation, unified in the Body of Christ, gifted by the Holy Spirit, and built up by the gifted men (vv. 1-16), we should therefore ... walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk. We cannot accomplish the glorious work of Christ by continuing to live the way the world lives.” [MacArthur, 165] “Ephesians 4:1-16 has set the stage for the exhortatory material that Follows in 4:17-6:20, and serves as the introductory framework for the rest of the paraenesis. What follows consists of a series of paragraphs which spell out in detail how local congregations and Christian households should heed the exhortation of 4:1-3. In his opening injunction Paul admonishes his readers to live worthily of the divine calling they have received (4:1). Significantly, relationships within the body of Christ, especially conduct characterized by harmony, are the first issue the apostle addresses as an essential element in their living consistently with this calling (vv. 1-3; note also vv. 4-16). Now in 4:17-24, the first of several major sections which follow, Paul deliberately picks up again the language of ‘walking’, and contrasts the readers’ lifestyle in Christ with that of outsiders (v. 17).” [O’Brien, 318]

I say and testify in the Lord, — λέγω καὶ μαρτύρομαι ἐν κυρίῳ [legō kai marturomai en kuriō] — IMPORTANT AND URGENT — The sense is *‘I am saying and solemnly declaring in the Lord.’* (Wuest) While the translations vary, the sense of what they mean are just about identical: Paul is placing great importance and divine authority on what he is about to say:

‘This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord’ [Harold Hoehner]

‘This, then, is what I say and affirm in the Lord’ [F. F. Bruce]

‘This, then, I solemnly declare in the Lord’ [Andrew Lincoln]

‘So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord’ [Peter O’Brien], *‘Therefore, I tell you this and I insist in the Lord’* [Clinton Arnold], *‘This I go on to say and insist in the Lord’* [Ernest Best]

“Testify: A word of solemn appeal occurring elsewhere in the N.T. only in Acts xxii. 26 (St. Paul speaking) and Gal. v. 3.” [Moule, 114] **“The seriousness of his appeal is intensified by his addition of the verb ‘I insist’ (marturomai) and the prepositional phrase ‘in the Lord’ (en kurio). Although the added verb often has the sense of ‘testify,’ here it is used with the meaning ‘insist’ or ‘implore’ (see also 1 Thess 2:12).”** [Arnold, 280f; see also Best, 416; Lincoln, 270, 276; Hoehner, 582; Eadie, 327; Snodgrass, 229; Lange’s, 160; MacArthur, 167]

PAUL IS NOT SWEARING AN OATH BUT EMPHASIZING THE DIVINE AUTHORITY BEHIND HIS

ADMONITIONS — Paul’s use of *‘in the Lord’* is not to be taken as if he were affirming on oath the truth of what he is saying but rather functions to lend authority to the exhortation. **“Paul does not simply urge his readers on his own initiative. He writes as one who is ‘a prisoner in the Lord’ (4:1) and whose admonition comes with the full weight of the Lord’s authority (cf. 1 Thess. 4:1).”** [O’Brien, 319; see also Arnold, 281; Salmond, 338; Ellicott, 102]] **“Paul speaks as one who had access to the mind of Christ, knew his will, and could therefore speak in his name.”** [Hodge, 179] “Here, where an apostolic precept is concerned, it is implied that the apostle speaks with authority. ... In the N.T., indeed, the expression acquires a new significance from the idea of fellowship and union with Christ and with God. **Whatever the believer does, is done with a sense of dependence on Him and union with Him.**” [Abbott, 128] “In the Lord: As myself being ‘in Him,’ and as to those who are in the same union. Cp. Gal. v. 10 (‘I have confidence towards you in the Lord,’ Gr.); below, vi. 1 (‘obey in the Lord’), etc. **The phrase ‘in the Lord’ occurs 45 times in St Paul; ‘in Christ,’ or closely kindred phrases, nearly 80 times.**” [Moule, 114] **We as believers are therefore to obey because of the authority the Lord has over our lives as His children.**

that you no longer walk — μηκέτι ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν [mēketi humas peripatein] — THE DANGER FACING THESE BELIEVERS WAS NOT PERSECUTION BUT A RELAPSE INTO THEIR FORMER WAY OF LIFE — Kenneth Wuest: *‘that no longer are you to be ordering your behavior.’* **“As [Paul] sees it, the peril facing Gentile believers is neither persecution brought on by their new attitude to paganism nor the influence of heretical intellectual ideas but a relapse into their former pre-Christian ways, which are the ways of the world around them. This could happen if believers forsook their faith or introduced their pre-Christian attitudes into the church... One important defence against non-Christian ways is for believers to understand the nature of the new group they have joined and their place in it.”** [Best, 415]

no longer — μηκέτι [mēketi] — ‘STOP LIVING THE WAY YOU USED TO’ — Some thoughts about Paul’s emphasis here:

- **The readers used to live as Paul describes** — By saying *‘henceforth no longer live...’* the obvious implication is they did at one time live in such a manner. “Their behaviour is no longer to be as it once was. The precise significance of [‘no longer’] is not clear: it could mean that they should not fall back into pre-conversion ways but, more probably, means that they should not continue in ways which they will not have wholly abandoned when converted, for this appears to be the word’s significance in v. 14.” [Best, 416f; see also Hoehner, 582f] Peter also notes picks up on this same point:

‘Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.’ (1 Pet 4:1-4 NKJV)

● **This is not to say all Paul's readers lived depraved lives** — *“The picture of the Gentiles style of life is painted in the blackest colors. [Paul] is not interested in a balanced analysis that would point out positive features of Gentile life, nor is his purpose to enable his readers to feel superior. Instead he wants to provide decisive reasons why they should be distinctively Christian, and the more drastic the contrast, the more effective is his exhortation likely to be.”* [Lincoln, 276f]

● **We are to ‘habitually live’ the new life as believers** — Bible students point out the present tense used here denotes Paul's readers were to now ‘make a habit’ of avoiding the way the other Gentiles lived. *“This prohibition, which differentiates sharply between the way of life of the readers and that of the members of the surrounding society, underlines the distinctive quality necessary to any living that is to be worthy of believers’ calling (cf. 4:1). The [meketi], ‘no longer,’ reminds one of the temporal ‘once ... now,’ contrast schema in both parts of chap. 2. The change of status for the Gentile readers, which was indicated there, has to be accompanied by a change of ‘walk’ (cf. also 2:2, 10). They cannot continue in their actual conduct as they had done in the past and as though none of the immense changes [Paul] has recalled in chap. 2 had taken place. Continual effort, and therefore continued exhortation, is needed if they are to appropriate the effects of those changes.”* [Lincoln, 276]

● **Believers are not instantly perfected** — Despite those who teach some type of ‘instant sanctification,’ Paul's statement also makes it clear all believers enter the Christian life with residual baggage from our former lives. *“This understanding recognises that they will not have become perfect immediately they became Christian.”* [Best, 417]

● **This change of behavior is inward as well as outward** — *While Paul continues his admonition by giving examples in which they were to change, it would be a mistake to imagine Paul's emphasis was external only. “There is extensive corruption in our hearts that needs to be rooted out. In the various vices Paul mentions, many reflect aspects of the inner corruption that needs to be eliminated and replaced with Godlike attitudes. Some of these feelings and dispositions include bitterness, anger, and rage (4:26, 31). Covetousness and greed are present among those who face the temptation to steal (4:28), and deceit is in the hearts of those who struggle with lying (4:25). Since ‘filthy’ talk (4:29) likely includes sexual innuendo, this suggests the presence of lust. All of these rotten and corrupt tendencies, present to one degree or another in the hearts of Christians, need to be progressively eradicated. Paul wants these base attitudes to be replaced by attributes that are characteristic of their new family identity. This includes the development of tenderheartedness (4:32), kindness (4:32), and an ability to control one's anger — both in terms of not letting anger persist and avoiding anger for the wrong reasons (such as an injured pride). Above all, love is the most important virtue to emulate.”* [Arnold, 313f]

● **The unsaved do not need reform, they need regeneration** — Our American Christian culture has almost done away with the need for salvation. People's problem is no longer that of sin but ‘low self-esteem’ or other such psychological issues. Someone who is a drunkard is not a sinner but has a sickness. Same-sex expressions are not sin but ‘alternative lifestyle choices.’ Stealing is the result of poverty and our ‘oppressive society.’ Greed and lust for power is acceptable and ‘the American way.’ Blasphemy is not even considered; in fact, using the Lord's name in vain is a common occurrence amongst professed believers, especially in our social media. Any clear command of the Lord is no longer considered an obligation to be obeyed but rather a choice of our Christian liberty, even in the realms of marriage and divorce. *Paul here as others throughout the New Testament clearly states the issue is not that we are ‘good’ people in need of a moral reformation but that we are enemies of God, having willfully and knowingly disobeyed His just commands and under His condemnation and wrath. The answer is not that we ‘turn over a new leaf’ but that we bow our knees to our offended Sovereign, crying out for mercy and forgiveness, desiring to no longer live in rebellion but willingly submitting to His control of our lives. Our great need is for God to create in us a new heart, give us new desires and the strength to live in a manner pleasing to Him, and to forgive us because of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross for sinners such as us. That is the plain teaching of the New Testament but is no longer being taught in many of our churches across this country!* “When a person believes and confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and is thereby born again, a transformation takes place in his basic nature. *The change is even more basic and radical than the change that will take place at death. When a believer dies, he has already been fitted for heaven, already been made a citizen of the kingdom, already become a child of God.* He simply begins to perfectly experience the divine nature he has had since his spiritual birth, because for the first time he is free from the unredeemed flesh. The future receiving of his glorified body (cf. 1 Cor. 15:42-54) will not make him better, since he is already perfected; but it will give him the full capacity for all that eternal resurrection life involves. *Salvation is not a matter of improvement or perfection of what has previously existed. It is total transformation. The New Testament speaks of believers having a new mind, a new will, a new heart, a new inheritance, a new relationship, new power, new knowledge, new wisdom, new perception, new understanding, new righteousness, new love, new desire, new citizenship, and many other new things — all of which are summed up in newness of life* (Rom. 6:4). At the new birth a person becomes ‘a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come’ (2 Cor. 5:17). It is not simply that he receives something new but that he becomes someone new ‘I have been crucified with Christ:’ Paul said; ‘and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me’ (Gal. 2:20). *The new nature is not added to the old nature but replaces it. The transformed person is a completely new ‘I.’ In contrast to the former love of evil (cf. John 3:19-21; Rom. 1:21-25; 28-32), that new self — the deepest, truest part of the Christian — now loves the law of God, longs to fulfill its righteous demands, hates sin, and longs for deliverance from the unredeemed flesh, which is the house of the eternal new creation until*

glorification (see Rom. 7:14-25; 8:22-24).” [MacArthur, 163f]

to walk — περιπατήσαι [peripatēsai] — “[To ‘walk’ in most instances] has a literal sense in classical literature, the LXX, the Gospels, and Acts. In the rest of the NT, forty-seven out of forty-nine times and all eight times in Ephesians (2:2, 10; 4:1, 17 bis; 5:2, 8, 15), it is used metaphorically referring to conduct or lifestyle, whether negatively (e.g., Eph 2:2; 1 Cor 3:3; Col 3:7; 2 Thess 3:11) or positively (Eph 4:1; 5:2; Rom 6:4; Gal 5:16). Certainly, in this context, it refers to the lifestyle of the believer.” [Hoehner, 504] “Paul wants their attitudes and conduct to become sharply differentiated from the non-Christian Greeks and Romans with whom they live. Once again Paul uses the Greek word ‘walk’, which comes from Paul’s Jewish background, to characterize the features of their daily lifestyle. In the following lines, Paul will challenge them much more deeply than simply seeking a modification of their behavior.” [Arnold, 281] “Lit., *no longer walk*. At their conversion *‘old things were passed away’* (2 Cor. v. 17) as to principle. Let this be now realized, continuously and ever more completely, in practice.” [Moule, 114] Alford: *“that ye no longer (‘as once’) walk as also...”* “**To walk, in Scripture language, includes all the manifestations of life, inward and outward, seen and unseen. It does not express merely the outward, visible deportment. Men are said to walk with God, which refers to the secret fellowship of the soul with its Maker, more than to the outward life. So here the walk, which the apostle enjoins us to avoid, is not only the visible deportment characteristic of the Gentiles, but also the inward life of which the outward deportment is the manifestation.**” [Hodge, 179]

‘TO WALK’ USED THROUGHOUT EPHESIANS — This theme of ‘walking’ is a common one in Ephesians:

*‘in which you once **walked**, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience’* (Eph 2:2 ESV)

*‘For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should **walk** in them.’* (Eph 2:10 ESV)

*‘I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to **walk** in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called’* (Eph 4:1 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.’* (Eph 4:17 ESV)

*‘And **walk** in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.’* (Eph 5:2 ESV)

*‘for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. **Walk** as children of light’* (Eph 5:8 ESV)

*‘Look carefully then how you **walk**, not as unwise but as wise’* (Eph 5:15 ESV)

‘IF ONE IS A BELIEVER, THERE IS TO BE A DIFFERENCE!’ — “*Christians are called to live their daily lives in a way that is sharply differentiated from the world around them and from the lifestyle that characterized their pre-Christian past. Paul wants the Ephesians’ lives to be determined by their relationship with Jesus Christ and the new identity they have in him. This will involve allowing the Holy Spirit to change their way of thinking and to bring their lifestyles into conformity with their new identity.*” [Arnold, 278]

as (the rest of) the Gentiles walk — καθὼς καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἔθνη περιπατεῖ [kathōs kai ta (loipa) ethnē peripatei] — Paul is telling the believers to no longer live as their unsaved counterparts live, and how they themselves used to live prior to their conversion. Kenneth Wuest: *‘as the Gentiles order their behavior.’* That Paul is making a distinction between the believers’ new life in Christ and their old life is the point, so much so that some manuscripts even add the word λοιπὰ [loipa], *‘remaining, rest of, that which remains over’* before the word *‘Gentiles:’*

‘walke not as other gentyls walke’ (Tyndale, KJV)

‘walke not as other Gentiles walke’ (Geneva)

‘walk, as also the other nations walk’ (YLT)

‘no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk’ (NKJV)

This word is absent from the majority of manuscripts and considered unnecessary by most of the commentators I have read. The point is clear and the same with or without the added word *‘other.’* The newer versions omit it:

‘no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk’ (RV)

‘no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk’ (ASV)

‘no longer live as the Gentiles do’ (RSV, NIV)

‘walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk’ (NASV)

‘no longer walk as the Gentiles do’ (ESV)

John MacArthur describes the wicked conditions surrounding the Ephesians:

“Like the church in our own day, the churches at Ephesus and in almost every non-Palestinian area in New Testament

times were surrounded by rank paganism and its attendant immorality. Ephesus was a leading commercial and cultural city of the Roman empire. It boasted the great pagan temple of Artemis, or Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. But it was also a leading city in debauchery and sexual immorality. Some historians rank it as the most lascivious city of Asia Minor.

“The temple of Artemis was the center of much of the wickedness. Like those in most pagan religions, its rituals and practices were but extensions of man’s vilest and most perverted sins. Male and female roles were interchanged, and orgiastic sex, homosexuality, and every other sexual perversion were common. Artemis was herself a sex goddess, represented by an ugly, repulsive black female idol that looked something like a cross between a cow and a wolf. She was served by thousands of temple prostitutes, eunuchs, singers, dancers, and priests and priestesses. Idols of Artemis and other deities were to be seen everywhere, in every size and made out of many different materials. Of special popularity were silver idols and religious artifacts. It was because Paul’s preaching cut deeply into that trade that the Ephesian silversmiths rallied the populace against him and his fellow believers (Acts 19:24-28).

“The temple of Artemis contained one of the richest art collections then in existence. It was also used as a bank, because most people feared stealing from within its walls lest they incur the wrath of the goddess or other deities. A quarter mile-wide perimeter served as an asylum for criminals, who were safe from apprehension and punishment as long as they remained within the temple confines. For obvious reasons, the presence of hundreds of hardened criminals added still further to Ephesus’s corruption and vice. The fifth-century B.C. Greek philosopher Heraclitus, himself a pagan, referred to Ephesus as ‘the darkness of vileness. The morals were lower than animals and the inhabitants of Ephesus were fit only to be drowned.’ There is no reason to believe that the situation had changed much by Paul’s day. If anything, it may have been worse.

“The church at Ephesus was a small island of despised people in a giant cesspool of wickedness. Most of the believers had themselves once been a part of that paganism. They frequently passed by places where they once caroused and ran into friends with whom they once indulged in debauchery. They faced continual temptations to revert to the old ways, and the apostle therefore admonished them to resist. *‘This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles walk.’* Peter gave a similar word when he wrote, ‘For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you’ (1 Pet. 4:3-4).

“On the basis of what we are in Christ and of all that God now purposes for us as His redeemed and beloved children, we are to be absolutely distinct from the rest of the world, which does not know or follow Him. Spiritually we have already left the world and are now citizens of heaven. We are therefore not to ‘love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever’ (1 John 2:15-17). The world’s standards are wrong, its motives are wrong, its aims are wrong. Its ways are sinful, deceitful, corrupt, empty, and destructive.” [MacArthur, 165ff]

THE TERM ‘GENTILE’ IS CONTEXT DRIVEN — The word translated ‘Gentile’ ἔθνη [ethnē] is a root from which we get our word ‘ethnic’. As with many words, the sense of the word ‘Gentile’ changes with the context. It could be summed up to be used either *racially* or *religiously*. **BAGD** (*Bauer-Danker Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*) gives the basic definition as follows: “a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions: ‘nation, people’” (Acts 8:9, ‘the Samaritan people’ [ethnos]; Acts 10:22, ‘the Jewish nation’ [ethnos]; John 11:48, ‘the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation’ [ethnos]; John 11:50, ‘it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish’ [ethnos]; Matt 28:19, ‘go therefore and make disciples of all nations’ [ethnē]). See also Matt 20:25; 21:43; 24:7, 14; Mark 10:42; 11:17; 13:8, 10; Luke 12:30; 21:10; 22:25; Acts 13:19; 17:26. **Paul has already used this word in Ephesians to make a purely racial distinction (in these verses the word has the sense of ‘all non-Jews’):**

‘Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands’ (Eph 2:11)

‘For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles’ (Eph 3:1)

‘Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ’ (Eph 3:8)

So whether they were saved Gentiles or unsaved Gentiles, this was purely a racial distinction. But note in our verse Paul is not speaking in terms of race but rather *religiously* (in our verse the word ‘Gentile’ could therefore be translated ‘pagans, heathens, those without Christ’):

‘This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as the Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind’ (Eph 4:17)

Paul is not lumping all the non-Jews together into one category because those to whom he was talking were also Gentiles according to race; the difference here is that they were Gentiles whom the Lord had saved and they were not to act like those

Gentiles who did not know the Lord.

Sometimes Paul uses the word to differentiate between Jewish believers, but again not racially because Paul is not referring to all the Gentiles (by race) but only those Gentiles who were believers:

‘That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel’
(Eph 3:6)

“These, not Jews by race or religious conversion, have been able to become members of the church on equal terms with Jewish Christians. Jews regarded the moral standards of Gentiles in general as debased and the first Christians, all Jews by birth, continued to think in this way and so applied the word to those who were neither Christians nor Jews, even though within the church the Jewish — non-Jewish distinction was disappearing. Consequently there is no single English word which can be used on every occasion to translate the term; the context must determine the rendering. In v. 17 the sense will be ‘pagan’ or ‘heathen’ since stress is being laid on the non-Jewish nature of the culture from which the readers have been converted.” [Best, 417; see also Lincoln, 276; Hoehner, 583; Muddiman, 212; Snodgrass, 229; MacArthur, 165]

in the futility of their mind, — ἐν ματαιότητι τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν [en mataiotēti tou noos autōn] — Paul has told the Gentile believers not to live as their unsaved counterparts. Here he begins to describe the manner in which the pagans live.

‘FUTILITY’ = ‘WITHOUT PURPOSE, MEANINGLESSNESS, EMPTINESS, USELESSNESS’ — ἐν ματαιότητι [en mataiotēti] — “Although in the O.T. idols are frequently called μάταια [mataia] (compare Acts xiv. 15), the substantive is not to be limited to idolatry, to which there is no special reference here. *It is the falseness and emptiness of their thoughts that are in question.... [I]t refers to the whole moral and intellectual character of heathenism; their powers were wasted without fruit.*” [Abbott, 129] “‘Vanity’ here is not self-conceit, which would require another Gr. word. *It is the ‘emptiness’ of illusion, specially of the state of illusion which sees pleasure in sin.*” [Moule, 115] “‘[V]anity’ in the sense of purposelessness, uselessness. There is nothing in the clause to restrict it to the case of idol-worshippers or to that of the heathen philosophers. It is a description of the walk of the heathen world generally – a walk moving within the limits of intellectual and moral resultlessness, given over to things devoid of worth or reality.” [Salmond, 339; see also Wuest, 106] “But we must not restrict the word to idolatry: *it betokens the waste of the whole rational powers on worthless objects.*” [Alford, 121] “*In the futility of their minds.*’ [mataiotes] denotes *not merely finitude or transitoriness but the emptiness, folly, and ultimate pointlessness that has affected the Gentiles’ faculty of intellectual and moral perception.*” [Lincoln, 277] “*The term translated here as ‘meaninglessness’ (mataiotes) is used extensively in the LXX of Ecclesiastes to characterize life that is not lived on the basis of the fear of God (see, e.g., Eccl 1:2, 14; 2:1, 11, 15, 17, 19). Life is vain, futile, and without purpose unless it is ordered around God and his purposes.*” [Arnold, 281] “*Heathen culture being then devoid of real value, its religions will be also. This of course would not have been the verdict of those in it. The worthlessness does not lie in the world as such, for all that God made is good, but in the minds of those who live in it.*” [Best, 418] “The noun [mataiotes] is a word that is rarely used. It has the meaning of ‘futility’ or ‘emptiness’ of humans. It occurs in the LXX fifty-four times (appears only in canonical books): thirty-nine times in Ecclesiastes, fourteen times in the Psalms, and once in Proverbs. It translates four Hebrew words, forty-three times for [a Hebrew word] having the idea of ‘vanity, purposelessness, absurdity, and worthlessness.’ In the NT it occurs only three times. In 2 Pet 2:18 it talks about false prophets who utter loud boasts of complete folly. In Rom 8:20 it conveys the idea that creation is subjected to futility or purposelessness in that its goal cannot be achieved. In other words, the earth was to produce fruit to preserve life but was thwarted due to the curse. In 1 Cor 15:17 Paul uses the adjective [mataios] to indicate that if Christ had not been raised, their faith ‘could not achieve its goal’ for they would still be in their sins (v. 17).” [Hoehner, 583] “The meaning seems to be, that all the efforts and operations of their spiritual nature ended in dreams and disappointment.... The ethical and religious element of their life was unsatisfactory and cheerless, alike in worship and in practice, the same as to present happiness as to future prospect, for they knew not ‘man’s chief end.’” [Eadie, 328] “Even in the ethical field, it is implied, the most strenuous efforts of pagans are vain, because they lack the inner power to enable them to live up to their highest ideals.” [Bruce, 355] “The phrase ‘in the futility of their minds’ should be compared with ‘renewed in the spirit of your mind’ at verse 23. Rom. 8.5f. (cf. 8.20) explains the contrast: ‘the mind that is set on the flesh’ ends in the futility of death, while ‘the mind that is set on the spirit is life and peace’.... The most basic futility is to deny human dependence on God the Creator (Rom. 1.21; cf. Ps. 14.1).” [Muddiman, 212f] “As M. Barth expressed dramatically, ‘With one single word Paul describes the majority of the inhabitants of the Greco-Roman empire ... as aiming with silly methods at a meaningless goal.’” [Snodgrass, 230] “What is wrong with the mind of the unsaved person? For one thing, his thinking is ‘vain’ (futile). It leads to no substantial purpose. *Since he does not know God, he cannot truly understand the world around him, nor can he understand himself.*” [Wiersbe, 39] “Yet Paul says that spiritually the operation of the natural mind is futile and unproductive. *Mataiotes* (futility) refers to that which fails to produce the desired result, that which never succeeds. It was therefore used as a synonym for empty, because it amounts to nothing. The spiritual thinking and resulting life-style of the Gentiles—here representing all the ungodly—is inevitably empty, vain, and void of substance. The life of an unbeliever is bound up in thinking and acting in an arena of ultimate trivia. He consumes himself in the pursuit of goals that are purely selfish, in the accumulation of that which is temporary, and in looking for satisfaction in that which is intrinsically deceptive and disappointing. The unregenerate person plans and resolves everything on the basis of his own thinking. He becomes his own ultimate authority and he follows his own thinking to its ultimate outcome of futility, aimlessness, and meaninglessness — to the self-centered emptiness that characterizes our age (cf. Ps. 94:8-11; Acts 14:15; Rom. 1:21-22).” [MacArthur, 168]

THE IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT THINKING — **of their mind,** — τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν [tou noos autōn] — “*To begin with, Christians think differently from unsaved people. Note the emphasis here on thinking: mind (Eph. 4:17, 23),*

understanding (Eph. 4:18), ignorance (Eph. 4:18), 'learned Christ' (Eph. 4:20). Salvation begins with repentance, which is a change of mind. The whole outlook of a person changes when he trusts Christ, including his values, goals, and interpretation of life." [Wiersbe, 39] "The term [nous], meaning 'mind,' has different nuances. The basic idea is one of perceiving, understanding, or thinking ability. It also can have the idea of disposition or moral attitude.... In the present passage the concept of disposition or moral attitude fits best. **The original purpose of the mind was to be able to comprehend God's revelation, but due to the fall a person's mind is unable to accomplish this goal. Hence, the 'futility of their minds' conveys the idea of not being able to perceive the revelation of God for which it was designed. Thus, its moral attitude or disposition prevents it from achieving its goal of proper moral decisions which are necessary for life (Rom 1:18-32).**" [Hoehner, 583f] "Here the word 'mind' refers to more than just the ability to reason. It refers to the capacity to think, plan, and make moral judgments and lifestyle choices. This could also be described as the set of worldview assumptions that guide non-Christian Gentiles in their thoughts about life and how they live in light of these convictions." [Arnold, 281] 'The higher moral and intellectual element'. [Ellicott, 103] "[nous] is not merely the intellectual faculty or understanding, but also the faculty for recognizing moral good and spiritual truth." [Salmond, 338f] "Because it lacks a true relationship with God, Gentile thinking suffers from the consequences of having lost touch with reality and is left fumbling with inane trivialities and worthless side issues." [O'Brien, 319f] "The first characteristic of unregenerate people is that they live in the futility of their mind. It is significant that the basic issue of life-style centers in the mind. Paul continues to speak of understanding and ignorance (v. 18), learning and teaching (vv. 20-21), and the mind and truth (vv 23-24) — all of which are related to the intellect. **Because unbelievers and Christians think differently they are therefore to act differently.** As far as spiritual and moral issues are concerned, an unbeliever cannot think straight. His rational processes in those areas are warped and inadequate (cf. Rom. 1:28; 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14; Col. 2:18; Titus 1:15).... Because man's sinfulness flows out of his reprobate mind, the transformation must begin with the mind (v. 23). Christianity is cognitive before it is experiential. It is our thinking that makes us consider the gospel and our thinking that causes us to believe the historic facts and spiritual truths of the gospel and to receive Christ as Lord and Savior. That is why the first step in repentance is a change of mind about oneself, about one's spiritual condition, and about God." [MacArthur, 167f] **This should highlight the importance of Paul's statement to the Romans:**

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' (Rom 12:1,2 NKJV)

OUR MIND'S INFLUENCE ON THE EMOTIONS (AND VICE VERSA) — We tend to divide between our emotions and our thinking; the Scriptures often unite the two.

"There are two principles which have had an obvious influence on the meaning of a large class of Hebrew words, and therefore on the meaning of the Greek terms which answer to them. **The one is the unity of the soul which forbids any such marked distinction between its cognitive and emotional faculties,** i. e. between the understanding and the heart, as is assumed in our philosophy, and therefore is impressed on our language. **In Hebrew the same word designates what we commonly distinguish as separate faculties. The Scriptures speak of an 'understanding heart,' and of 'the desires of the understanding,' as well as of 'the thoughts of the heart.'** They recognize that there is an element of feeling in our cognitions and an element of intelligence in our feelings. **The idea that the heart may be depraved and the intellect unaffected is, according to the anthropology of the Bible, as incongruous, as that one part of the soul should be happy and another miserable, one faculty saved and another lost.**

"Another principle nearly allied to the former is the moral and spiritual excellence of truth. Truth is not merely speculative, the object of cognition. It has moral beauty. In scriptural language, therefore, knowledge includes love; wisdom includes goodness; folly includes sin; the wise are holy, fools are wicked. Truth and holiness are united as light and heat in the same ray. There cannot be the one without the other. **To know God is eternal life; to be without the knowledge of God is to be utterly depraved. Saints are the children of light; the wicked are the children of darkness. To be enlightened is to be renewed; to be blinded is to be reprobated. Such is the constant representation of Scripture.**

"The *νοῦς* [nous], 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 reason, the understanding, the conscience, the affections are all comprehended by the term. Sometimes one and sometimes another of these modes of spiritual activity is specially referred to, but in the present case the whole soul is intended. The word *vanity*, according to the scriptural usage just referred to, includes moral as well as intellectual worthlessness, or fatuity. It is of all that is comprehended under the word [nous], the understanding and the heart, that this vanity is predicated." [Hodge, 179ff]

Others have written the same; e.g., John Eadie:

"[Nous] is not intellect simply, but in the case of believers it signifies that portion of the spiritual nature whose function is to comprehend and relish Divine truth. It is the region of thought, will, and susceptibility — the mind with its emotional capabilities. **In the Hebrew psychology the intellect and heart were felt to act and react on one another, so that we have such phrases as 'an understanding heart,' 1 Kings iii. 9 ; 'hid their heart from understanding,' Job xvii. 4 ; 'the desires of the mind,' Eph. ii. 3, etc.**" [Eadie, 328]

This is further illustrated as we compare our verse with that of Paul's statement in Romans:

'because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.' (Rom 1:21)

Here in Ephesians Paul uses *'understanding / thinking'* while to the Romans he uses *'heart,'* but the two terms were often used interchangeably (see Isa 57:11; Jer 31:33) insofar as **they both refer to the part of the person responsible for making lifestyle choices.** [Arnold, 282; see also Muddiman, 213; Best, 418f; Eadie, 330]

THE UNSAVED ARE DARKENED

v. 18 — **being those who have their understanding darkened,** — ἐσκοτισμένοι τῇ διανοίᾳ ὄντες [eskotismenoi tē dianoia ontes] — The word used here for 'understanding' is a form of the word for 'mind' used in the previous verse. Those knowledgeable in Greek describe it as *'the reason in action'* [Moule, 115] and that *'it is the faculty or seat of thinking and feeling; not just understanding but also feeling and desiring.'* [Salmond, 339] **"The word originally indicated the ability to think, then the organ through which understanding took place and finally the understanding itself. In the LXX and in the NT (where it is often equivalent to [kardia, 'heart'], Heb 8.10; 10.16 = Jer 31.33 LXX; cf 1 Pet 1.13; 2 Pet 3.1) it came to represent the whole person viewed as one who can experience knowledge, and understand and accept salvation. Those lacking this experience are blind, just as in 2.1 they were described as dead. Unlike the physically blind however they would be unaware of their condition."** [Best, 419] "That to which the darkness clings is set forth by [the understanding], which means the intellectual power of the mind, the mode of thought, the character, since the reference is not the formal faculty, but to its condition. Comp. Rom. i. 21f.; xi. 10." [Lange's, 161]

THE FIRST OF THREE PERFECT PARTICIPLES: 'DARKENED' — ἐσκοτισμένοι [eskotismenoi] — As mentioned in the introduction, vv. 17-19 centers around three perfect participles (a participle is a verbal adjective): *'darkened, alienated, and callous'*. This is the first of those participles.

'TO BE OR BECOME DARK, TO BE DARKENED' — This word is always passive in the NT and can be rendered *'to be darkened.'* It is used both literally and spiritually; literally of an astronomical event:

'For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine.' (Isa 13:10 LXX)

'Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.' (Matt 24:29)

'Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.' (Matt 27:45)

Spiritually it speaks of men's minds and hearts being closed off from the light of the Lord:

'because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.' (Rom 1:21)

'Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always.' (Rom 11:10)

'DARKENED' IS A STATE OF 'BLINDNESS' — **"The Gentile world out of which the readers were converted remained in a state of blindness. Earlier [Paul] had described believers as those who saw (1.18). The metaphor of sight, or lack of it, was used regularly by Jews of the spiritual as well as the mental condition of Gentiles: Jews see, others are blind; Jews are a light to blind Gentiles (Ps 135.16; Isa 42.6f; 49.6); the non-Jewish world is one of darkness. In fairness it must be said that Jews also described fellow Jews as blind (T Reub 3.8; T Dan 2.4; T Gad 6.2; T Levi 14.11; IQS 3.3; cf Mt 15.14; 23.16, 24; Rom 2.19). Christians took over the metaphor from Jews (Acts 26.18; Col 1.13; 1 Pet 2.9; Jn 8.12; Eph 5.11; 1 Th 5.4). It was also used widely in the ancient world, though generally in respect of mental rather than spiritual blindness; [Paul's] readers would therefore have easily have grasped its significance."** [Best, 419] **"They have no ruling purpose to guide them, no light by which to see their way, no Divine life to inspire them : they cannot know, because their heart is blind. The last phrase may recall to us by way of contrast the Apostle's prayer for the Gentile converts (1:18), that 'the eyes of their heart' might be enlightened. And the whole description may be compared with his accounts of their former state as 'in the world without hope and without God' (2:12)."** [Robinson, 146] "The unsaved man's thinking is futile because it is darkened. He thinks he is enlightened because he rejects the Bible and believes the latest philosophies, when in reality he is in the dark. 'Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools' (Rom. 1:22). But they think they are wise." [Wiersbe, 39] Note the translation by William Tyndale:

'blynded in their vnderstondynge beyng straungers from the lyfe which is in god thorow the ignorancy that is in them because of the blyndnes of their hertes' (Eph 4:18 Tyndale)

THE DARKENED MIND OF UNBELIEVERS IS CONTRASTED WITH THE ILLUMINATED HEART OF BELIEVERS — **While Paul paints a bleak picture of the spiritual darkness of unbelievers, he also gives a glowing picture of the opposite truth for those to whom the Lord has saved. While unbelievers are 'darkened,' believers have 'enlightened hearts' (Eph 1:18) so as to 'know God' (Eph 1:17) and to know 'the power of God' (Eph 1:19). "The Gentile way of life is meaningless because the Gentiles have no light to give them life and guidance. They are intellectually blacked out. In the ancient world light was a universal symbol for understanding. In Judaism (cf. Ps. 36:9) and the New Testament light is used**

of life-giving relation with God (cf. Eph. 1:18, 5:8-14).” [Snodgrass, 230; see also Arnold, 282; Muddiman, 213] “The light has gone out in the seat of Gentiles’ understanding so that they are no longer capable of apprehending ultimate truth. There is a clear contrast with believers, who have been given knowledge and the eyes of whose hearts have been enlightened; (1:17, 18; cf. also the sustained contrast between darkness and light in 5:8-14).” [Lincoln, 277]

THE TENSE EMPHATICALLY TEACHES A ‘FINISHED AND PERMANENT RESULT OF A PAST EVENT’ — As with the other two participles, the perfect tense denotes a process completed in past time, having present results. This means ‘darkness, blindness’ is a finished and permanent result. Those without Christ are therefore living in this continuing state. In fact, some commentators point out that the way Paul writes this phrase ‘forcibly expresses the persistence of their state of things.’ Here are some detailed comments from those knowledgeable in the Greek language:

“[O]nly in this passage and in the parallel passage (Col 1:21) is the perfect periphrastic formed by two participles. This usage was probably employed to emphasize the new state of things. Specifically, those Ephesians who were once Gentiles and walked in darkness were now enlightened believers (Eph 1:18). Conversely, the passage deals with unbelieving Gentiles who continue in the darkness of their reasoning processes. The perfect tense of these two participles expresses a completed action with continuing results in that dreadful state.” [Hoehner, 585f]

“Paul uses two perfect participles to characterize the ongoing condition of Gentiles who do not know God. The present participle ‘being’ (ontes) is unnecessary but forms a periphrastic construction with the two perfect participles to ‘express more forcibly the persistence’ of their condition.” [Arnold, 282]

“This darkness in their thinking was not some temporary condition; as the emphatic periphrastic expression indicates, the light of their understanding had gone out so that they were now in a state of being incapable of grasping the truth of God and his gospel.” [O’Brien, 320f]

“Paul uses the perfect tense here to show the finished and permanent result of the blinding of the mind by sin.” [Wuest, 106]

THE UNSAVED ARE ALIENATED

who have been alienated from the life of God (Wuest) – ἀπαλλοτριωμένοι τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ θεοῦ [apēllotriōmenoi tēs zōēs tou theou] — **‘ALIENATED, SEPARATED, TO BE ESTRANGED’** — “The participle from ἀπαλλοτριόω [apallotriōō], found three times in the LXX (Ps 69:8 [MT 69:9; LXX 68:9]; Ezek 14:5; 3 Macc 1:3), is used only two other times in the NT (Eph 2:12; Col 1:21), always in a perfect participial form, meaning ‘excluded’ or ‘alienated.’” [Hoehner, 586]

‘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.’ (Eph 2:12 ESV)

‘And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds’ (Col 1:21 ESV)

“‘Alienated’ is apallotriō, ‘to be estranged,’ used of those who have estranged themselves from God. It means also, ‘to shut out from one’s fellowship and intimacy.’” [Wuest, 107] Other definitions: ‘alienate, estrange, to be a stranger to, to be separated from.’ [Friberg’s Analytical Greek Lexicon] It is always used in the passive in the New Testament.

‘COMPLETED ACTION WITH CONTINUING RESULTS’ — *As mentioned above, this separation from the life of God is a completed action with continuing results. The unsaved are in a present permanent state of alienation from God.* [Hoehner, 586]

THIS PHRASE IS UNIQUE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT — The ‘life of God’ is a striking phrase not found anywhere else in Paul or the New Testament. *“The reference to the life of God is strange; we would expect something like ‘alienated from God’ or ‘excluded from salvation’. The life of God is presumably not God’s own life but the life he gives, and since God gives physical life to both pagans and believers [Paul] will be thinking of eternal life.”* [Best, 420; see also Muddiman, 213]

SEPARATED FROM THE LIFE THAT PROCEEDS FROM GOD — This ‘life from God’ is not merely ‘life according to God’ or ‘a virtuous life’ or ‘a life which God approves’. It is not a course of conduct but rather an element or principle of Divine life within us. The grammarians call this a ‘genitive of origin’, that is, this life is ‘life that comes from God, life which finds God as the source, spiritual life communicated by God, life which God gives, the life which God possesses in Himself and bestows on His children.’ [see Hoehner, 586; Arnold, 282; Abbott, 130; Salmond, 339; O’Brien, 321; Lange’s, 161; Muddiman, 213; Ellicott, 103] *“The life of God’ means the life of which God is the author. It is spiritual life. That is, the life of which the indwelling Spirit is the principle or source.”* [Hodge, 181f]

DEATH DOES NOT MEAN ‘CEASE TO EXIST’ BUT ‘SEPARATION’ — To ‘be alienated, separated from the life of God’ is described elsewhere as the Gentiles ‘having no hope and without God in the world’ (Eph 2:12), ‘dead in trespasses and sins’ (Eph 2:1), and ‘alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works’ (Col 1:21). All of these parallel descriptions prove *death is not a state of non-existence but rather a state of separation from life*. When a person dies physically they do not cease to exist but rather the physical body is separated from that spiritual essence of man. That person does not cease to exist but rather continues either in fellowship with the Father or cut off and separated from God. *“There is thus a natural movement, easily grasped by Gentile readers, from the blindness of the first clause to the loss of life implied in the second; the heathen are of*

course ‘dead’ in sin (2.1); life and death are opposites. In writing of exclusion from the life of God [Paul] is not thinking of some kind of alienation which psychiatrists could cure. What is required is not psychological treatment but something wholly new, a new being (v. 24).” [Best, 420; see also O’Brien, 321; Arnold, 282; Lincoln, 278] “The Gentile world having severed itself from this life was spiritually dead, and therefore a sepulchral pall was thrown over its intellect. There could be no light in their mind, because there was no life in their hearts, for the life in the Logos is the light of men. The heart reacts on the intellect.” [Eadie, 330f] Note: when we pray, we are not praying for our loved ones to just ‘turn over a new leaf;’ rather we are praying for the Holy Spirit to make them alive!!

DOES THIS IMPLY WE WERE ONCE IN A STATE OF UNION? —

While some would deny the grammar used here implies that man once had life but lost it (e.g., Hoehner, 586), I would tend to agree with those who go back to our original state in Adam prior to the fall. “It is that life from God which existed in unfallen man, and re-exists in all believers who are in fellowship with God — the life which results from the operation and indwelling of the Holy Ghost.” [Eadie, 330] “The words, Gr. and Eng., imply a fall from a state of union.... Here [as in 2:12] the Human Soul in the abstract is viewed as having shared, in its unfallen state, the Life of God, and having lost it in the Fall. And this view is transferred from the Soul to the souls in which it is individualized. Historically, we begin our existence aliens; ideally, we began in union and fell from it.” [Moule, 115]

THIS LIFE IS MORE THAN MERE EXISTENCE —

As ‘death’ is not a state of non-existence but rather a state of separation, so is life more than existence. All living beings have ‘life’ in the sense of existing but quite obviously Paul is making a distinction between those who belong to the Lord (with ‘life’) and those who are separated from the Lord (‘dead, separated’). “[T]he word ‘life’ occurs here only in the Epistle. The phrase denotes the spiritual force given to the human spirit by spiritual contact with God, resulting in the action and exercise of holiness.... Its development is the state of glory, which is therefore very often called, in a special sense, ‘eternal life’ (e.g., Matt. xxv. 46), though that phrase is also fully true of the present state of the believer (1 Joh. iii. 15, v. 13). It is plain that the word ‘life,’ in spiritual connexions, means very much more than ‘existence.’” [Moule, 115f] “The word [zoe], ‘life,’ generally does not have the idea of the course of life, but rather the existence of life as opposed to death. In the OT (appearing 294 times in the LXX, 183 times in the canonical books) life is God’s gift to human beings. Hence, it is not referring to the ‘virtuous life,’ ‘godly life,’ or ‘the life that is approved by God’ but ‘living existence.’ The distinction between the existence of life and the conduct of life is clearly seen in Gal 5:25. This word is used 135 times in the NT, approximately half the time in Johannine literature, thirty-seven times by Paul and only here in Ephesians.” [Hoehner, 586]

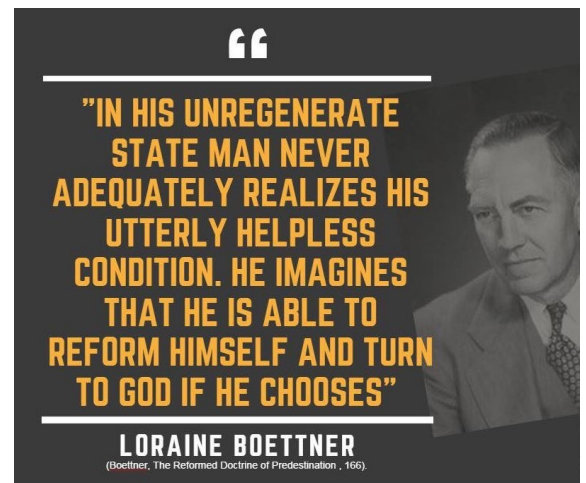
THE IMPLICATION IS THAT BELIEVERS HAVE THIS LIFE — Conversely, the clear implication of Paul’s statement is that the believer has a life that comes from God. “This brings to mind Paul’s declaration that they were alienated from the citizenship of Israel (2:12) but now they are reconciled to God and have access to him (2:13-18) and are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household (2:19). Yet there is no specific reference in Ephesians of their having the life of God. Although Paul speaks often of eternal life in other letters (Rom 2:7; 5:21; 6:22, 23; Gal 6:8; 1 Tim 1:16; 6:12; Titus 1:2; 3:7), there are only a few references to life from God (Rom 5:17, 18; 8:6, 10; 2 Tim 1:10). In these passages this life is described as ‘the supernatural life belonging to God and Christ, which the believers will receive in the future, but which they also enjoy here and now.’” [Hoehner, 586f]

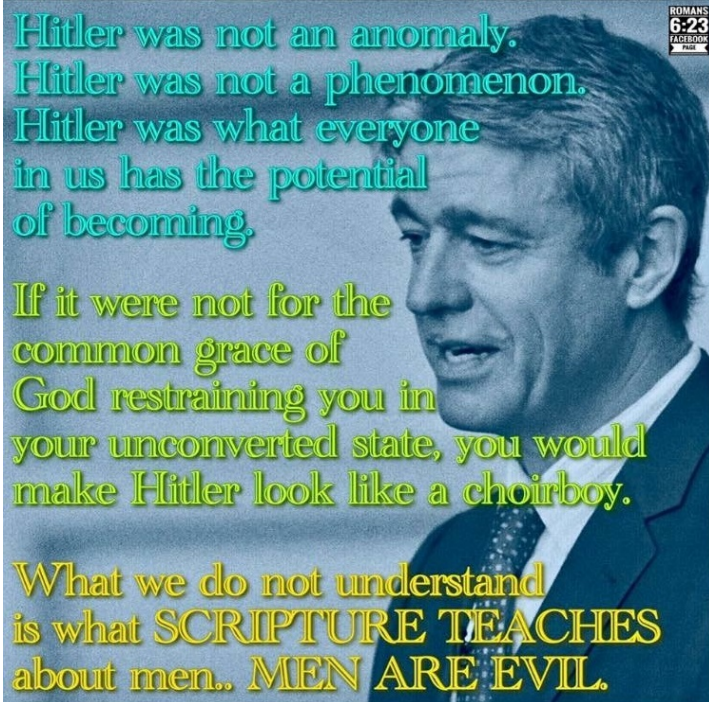


because of the ignorance that is in them, — διὰ τὴν ἀγνοίαν τὴν οὖσαν ἐν αὐτοῖς [dia tēn agnoian tēn ousan en autois] — **THE UNSAVED ARE ALIENATED BECAUSE OF THEIR IGNORANCE —** Paul now gives the reason for the unsaved being alienated from the life of God: the ignorance within them, which again results from the hardness of their hearts. “Through the ignorance: Better, on account of, etc. They lost connexion with the Life of God, and so remain, because of their ignorance of the eternal facts about God and holiness.... The practical aspect of the matter is that he maintains disconnexion by the ignorance of self-will. He ‘wills not to come that he may have life’ (Joh. v. 40), ‘seeing no beauty’ in Christ, ‘that he should desire Him’ in an effectual sense (Isai. liii. 2).” [Moule, 116; see also Abbott, 130; Salmond, 339; Lincoln, 278; Arnold, 281; O’Brien, 321; Hoehner, 587; Eadie, 331]

NOTE THEIR ALIENATION IS NOT BECAUSE OF SOMETHING EXTERNAL — “Their alienation had its cause not in something external, casual, or superficial, but in themselves — in a culpable ignorance in their own nature or heart.” [Salmond, 339f] “τὴν οὖσαν ἐν αὐτοῖς [tēn ousan en autois, ‘which is in them’] seems intended to point out the indwelling, deep-seated nature of the [ignorance], and to form a sort of parallelism to [their hearts].” [Ellicott, 103f]

‘IGNORANCE’ COULD BE UNDERSTOOD AS ‘AN INNOCENT LACK OF KNOWLEDGE’ — “The noun [agnoia] is





used of 'ignorance, lack of perception.' In the LXX it occurs twenty-eight times and in the canonical books it appears seventeen times translating five Hebrew words. **It is used of sin that is committed unwittingly or unknowingly** (Lev 5:18; 22:14; Eccl 5:5). In the NT it is used only four times. In Acts 3:17 Peter mentions that the Jews acted in ignorance when they crucified Jesus. In Acts 17:30 Paul relates that God overlooked times of ignorance in reference to sins committed before the time of the cross. Further, Peter tells believers that they are not to be conformed to the passions of their former ignorance (1 Pet 1:14), their preconversion days." [Hoehner, 587] **So at first glance, some may confuse Paul's statement as a defense for their lack of culpability, but see below ...**

THIS IGNORANCE WAS A CHOICE AND THE UNSAVED ARE THEREFORE CULPABLE —

If this ignorance was caused by something external or an active force preventing our learning, perhaps mankind could stand before the Lord with at least a hint of an excuse. But this ignorance is an act of wilful choice against God, shown as Paul continues by stating it is because of 'the hardness of their hearts' (see below). Paul teaches the same thing in Romans 1:18-28.

"[Paul] first attributes their condition to their 'ignorance'. At first glance, this might seem to alleviate their culpability,

simply because they do not know any better. But Paul clarifies in Romans 1:18ff. that God has indeed left himself a sufficient witness in the world so that they are not entirely ignorant of his existence. In fact, he claims that they 'know' God but they have chosen not to honor him as God or acknowledge his kindness to them, and thus they reject the witness he has given to them. In other words, they are ignorant of God in the sense that they have rejected him and do not know him personally." [Arnold, 282]

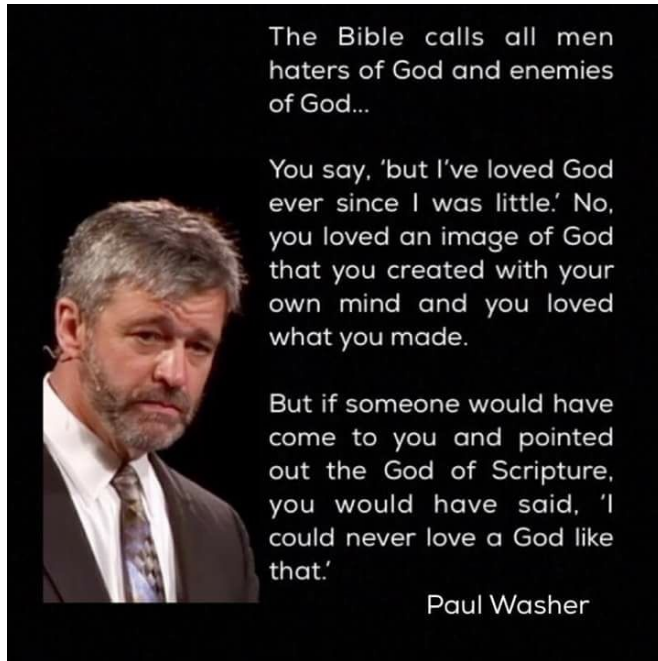
'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.' (Rom 1:18-32 NKJV)

"The present context speaks of the ignorance concerning God's revelation and will. This, however, is not innocent ignorance. It is parallel to Rom 1:18-23 where Paul outlines the degradation of mankind. He makes it very clear that human beings have rejected the manifest knowledge of God through creation, and thus, refused to glorify or thank God. As a result their reasoning processes became purposeless and their senseless heart became darkened. Their wisdom was foolishness as they exchanged God's incorruptible glory for corruptible idolatry. Such is not innocence but deliberate refusal of God and his will. Twice Paul states that people are without excuse (Rom 1:23; 2:1). Likewise, the ignorance in the present context is not innocent but also a flagrant refusal of the knowledge of God and his will. This ignorance is 'in them.' It is not an external but an internal cause for their alienation from the life of God. Thus the blame of their ignorance falls on them and not on God or external factors." [Hoehner, 587; see also Abbott, 131; Alford, 121] **This must be absolutely clear. While we can be sympathetic with those without Christ (as we should be, especially since each one of us were once among their number), we must remember no one is to blame but man himself! Nothing is keeping the lost from God except their own rebellious wills! Ultimately whenever some one dies without Christ and goes to eternal punishment, no one is to blame but himself!!! (Note this does not release us of our responsibility to pray, witness, live a submissive obedient life, etc. But while we may stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to answer for our lives, so the lost will stand before the Great White Throne Judgement and when they do, there will be no excuses!)**

WHILE MAN IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS REJECTION OF THE LORD, MAN DOES HAVE HIS ENEMIES — As is often the case in Scripture, multiple and sometimes paradoxical reasons are given for life's events. In this passage Paul makes the unsaved culpable for their darkness (this will be discussed and proven below) but elsewhere there are other intermediary agents for this darkness:

'in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience' (Eph 2:2 NKJV)

'But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. 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.' (2 Cor 4:3-6 NKJV)



The Bible calls all men haters of God and enemies of God...

You say, 'but I've loved God ever since I was little.' No, you loved an image of God that you created with your own mind and you loved what you made.

But if someone would have come to you and pointed out the God of Scripture, you would have said, 'I could never love a God like that.'

Paul Washer

'KNOWING' OR 'NOT KNOWING' GOD IS MORE THAN A MENTAL RESPONSE — *"To know God means to be in a close personal relationship with him. Knowledge has to do with an obedient and grateful response of the whole person, not simply intellectual assent. Likewise, 'ignorance' is a failure to be grateful and obedient. It describes someone's total stance, and this includes emotions, will, and action, not just one's mental response. Not to know the Lord is to ignore him, to say 'no' to his demands. Such ignorance is culpable."* [O'Brien, 321] *The New Testament describes salvation in several manners but one way used is that the saved are those who 'know Jesus Christ.' 'And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.'* (John 17:3)

because of the hardness of their heart — διὰ τὴν πῶρωσιν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν [dia tēn pōrōsin tēs kardias autōn] — **'HARDENING'** — πῶρωσιν [pōrōsin] — "Literally, as a medical technical term, of covering with a callous or a thick growth of skin, *hardening*; of the eyes, *dulling, blindness*; figuratively in the NT, of unwillingness to learn, *insensibility, obstinacy, stubbornness*. [Friberg's Analytical Greek Lexicon] BDAG adds, *'the state or condition of complete lack of understanding, dullness,*

insensibility, obstinacy.' The NEB translation conveys the ideal well:

'This then is my word to you, and I urge it upon you in the Lord's name. Give up living like pagans with their good-for-nothing notions. Their wits are beclouded, they are strangers to the life that is in God, because ignorance prevails among them and their minds have grown hard as stone.' (Eph 4:17,18 NEB)

"It is really derived from πῶρος [pōros], which originally meant 'tufa,' and then 'callus,' a callosity or hardening of the skin. (It is also used by medical writers of the 'callus' formed at the end of fractured bones, and of 'chalkstones' in the joints.) Hence, from the insensibility of the parts covered with hard skin, the verb means to make dull or insensible." [Abbott, 131] "The word conveys the idea of callus that serves as mortar (thus petrification) to reunite the surfaces of fractured bones or a pus which comes out of the bone and produces callus. Only the verb form ([pōroō]) is found in the LXX and it is found only once. In Job 17:7 it refers to the eyes growing dim. It appears also in the Alexandrian text of Prov 10:20 where it refers to the hardening of silver (rather than purified by fire). In the NT the noun occurs only three times. Mark 3:5 and Rom 11:25 refer to the hardness of the heart. Its use in the present context appears to demand the concept of 'hardness.' *The verb form is used five times, three times in reference to the hardening of hearts (Mark 6:52; 8:17; John 12:40), once to the hardening of the mind (2 Cor 3:14), and once to the hardening of people (Rom 11:7).... As mentioned in Eph 1:18 the heart is the center of a person, the seat of thought and understanding, will or volition, and, as here, of religious and moral conduct. The singular usage denotes that this heart belongs to each person in the groups and thus each person is responsible for this hardness. Thus, the revelation of God and his will is not able to penetrate the individual's heart or understanding. Hence, this is the cause of their being ignorant of the revelation of God and his will.*" [Hoehner, 588; see also Snodgrass, 230; Bruce, 355]

tufa – noun, Geology: Also called *calcareous tufa, calc-tufa, calc-tuff*. a porous limestone formed from calcium carbonate deposited by springs or the like.

"Because of the hardness of their heart, the ungodly are unresponsive to truth (cf. Isa. 44:18-20; 1 Thess. 4:5). Just as a corpse cannot hear a conversation in the mortuary, the person who is spiritually 'dead in (his) trespasses and sins' (Eph. 2:1) cannot hear or understand the things of God, no matter how loudly or clearly they may be declared or evidenced in his presence. Porosis (hardness) carries the idea of being rock-hard. It was used by physicians to describe the calcification that forms around broken bones and becomes harder than the bone itself. It was also used of the hard formations that sometimes occur in joints and cause them to become immobile. It could therefore connote the idea of paralysis as well as of hardness. Sin has a petrifying effect, and the heart of the person who continually chooses to sin becomes hardened and paralyzed to spiritual truth, utterly insensitive to the things of God.... And when men continually persist in following their own way, they will also eventually be confirmed in their

choice by the God of heaven. The Jews who heard Jesus teach and preach had the great advantage of having had God's Word given to them through Moses, the prophets, and other Old Testament writers. They had the even greater advantage of seeing and hearing God's own incarnate Son. But 'though He had performed so many signs before them,' John tells us, 'yet they were not believing in Him.... For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, "He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them"' (John 12:37, 39-40). Because they would not believe, they could not believe. God one day says, 'Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy, still be filthy' (Rev. 22:11)." [MacArthur, 169f]

SHOULD THIS BE BETTER RENDERED 'BLINDED'? — Many of the commentators note this word is better translated 'harden, hardness' than 'blindness.' Their reason for making such an observation goes back to a study done by Joseph Armitage Robinson (*St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: An Exposition* [MacMillan and Co., London England] 1909, reprinted 1923) where Robinson argues (pp. 263-274) that the word should be translated 'blindness' and not 'hardness.' Some of the translators agree with that understanding:

'blynded in their vnderstandynge beyng straungers from the lyfe which is in god thorow the ignorancy that is in them because of the blyndnes of their hertes' (Tyndale NT)

'Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart' (KJV)

'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' (NKJV)

Most of the commentators I have used argue against such a usage however; the best counter-argument of which I have read comes from Harold Hoehner: "The word [pōrosis] has been disputed. Robinson has argued that [pōrōsis], 'hardness,' and [pērōsis], 'blindness,' often have been confused by copyists and many of the versions have translated the first word as 'blindness.' Although 'hardness' is the primary sense of the word, he preferred to translate it 'blindness.' ... [Of all the passages in which the noun and verb forms of this word is used,] John 12:40 is the most noteworthy in relation to the present text. It speaks of God as the one who has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart. Certainly, in that context one would not translate [pōroō] as 'blinded' because it would be redundant. Furthermore, it is interesting to note ... that in the NT this word is never 'associated, even in metaphor, with the eyes.' Thus, in the present verse it is best to translate it 'hardened.'" [Hoehner, 587f; see also Best, 420f; Abbott, 131; Lincoln, 278; Eadie, 331; Moule, 116; O'Brien, 322; Hodge, 182]

AS MENTIONED ABOVE, THIS SHOWS UNSAVED MANKIND TO BE CULPABLE — *"If the two passive participles allowed pagans to think their condition was not their own fault, being the result of the action of God or an evil power, the two prepositional phrases bring out their responsibility. They are blind and excluded because of their ignorance and the hardness of their hearts. Their ignorance cannot be offered as an excuse for it does not arise out of a lack of information about the world or morality. It is an ignorance both about God, though not an intellectual deficiency since the devils can believe God exists but do not come to true enlightenment (Jas 2.19), and about their own true nature as people. This ignorance has no higher and lower levels; all have it to the same degree; neither learning nor experience can modify or remove it (Rom 1.21f; Wisd 13.1, 7-9); it is not a passing or temporary ignorance, nor is it one among a list of possible vices."* [Best, 420] *"This prepositional phrase now makes clear that the Gentiles' ignorance is culpable. At the center of their thinking, feeling, and volition, they have hardened themselves to God and to the knowledge of him that was available to them."* [Lincoln, 278] *"The Gentiles' inability to understand the light of God's truth is no excuse for their broken relationship with him. Indeed, the additional words, '[the ignorance] that is in them', show that the responsibility is not finally due to external factors. The blame falls squarely on their shoulders. As if to underscore the point, Paul adds that their delusion is 'due to hardness of heart'. This second causal clause is subordinate to the first, rather than coordinate or parallel with it: the Gentiles' culpable ignorance arose out of their obstinate rejection of God's truth.... [H]ere it signifies that 'pagan immorality is ... wilful and culpable, ... the result of their deliberate refusal of the moral light available to them in their own thought and conscience.' And an obstinate rejection of the truth of God is the beginning of the terrible downward path of evil."* [O'Brien, 321f] *"The disease began in the callous heart. It hardened itself against impression and warning, left the mind uninformed and indifferent, alienated itself from the life of God, and was at last shrouded in the shadow of death. Surely the Ephesians were not to walk as the other Gentiles placed in this hapless and degraded state."* [Eadie, 331] *"In reviewing these two verses a series of causes and effects becomes apparent. The scenario could be reconstructed by reversing the direction of the statements. The hardness of their hearts toward God caused their ignorance. Their ignorance concerning God and his will caused them to be alienated from the life of God. Their alienation caused their minds to be darkened, and their darkened minds caused them to walk in the futility of mind.... Its system is diametrically opposed to those who are believers. It is understandable why Paul exhorted the Ephesian believers not to walk as Gentiles do."* [Hoehner, 588f; see also Moule, 116; Snodgrass, 230; Bruce, 355]

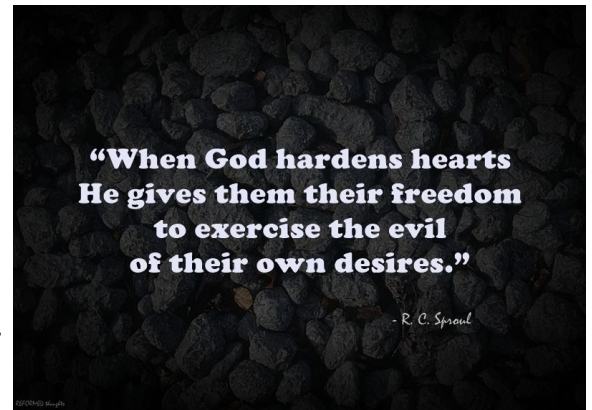
WHO HARDENS HEARTS AND HOW IS THIS ACCOMPLISHED? — *There is an age-long question about how this 'hardening of hearts' is initiated: does the Lord make the first move or do we as sinners? Whether we can come to an agreeable conclusion to this question or not, an important truth must be remembered: the hardening of sinners' hearts is a passive action by the Lord and not an active action. By that I am not referring to the tense of the words used, rather I am refuting the concept that a man on his own initiative begins to come to the Lord but God prevents them from coming! That is a totally unscriptural concept!!! No man after Adam makes any initiative to come to the Lord on his own!*

'As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God.' (Rom 3:10,11)

'No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.' (John 6:44)

For any person to seek the Lord requires the moving of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of sinners. To harden a person's heart therefore only requires the Lord to do nothing, to withhold the work of the Spirit upon the sinner and the sinner will harden his own heart against the ways of God! Regardless of 'who makes to first move', any movement towards the Lord must be credited to the mercy and grace of God Almighty towards a vile, wretched, unworthy sinner. Any 'hardening of the heart' must be credited to man's natural hatred towards holiness and anything that glorifies the Lord and is thus a result of judgment and holiness on the part of God.

"The motif of 'hardening' is common in the OT. There is a well-known interplay of texts in Exodus that speak both of Pharaoh hardening his own heart (Exod 8:32; 13:15) and God hardening his heart (e.g., Exod 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1). Yet Paul makes the proper understanding of the sequence clear in Rom 1:21—31. Douglas Moo points out a pattern that Paul develops in which he explains that people 'exchange' the truth of God for idols, lies, and unnatural sexual practices. Consequently, God 'hands them over' (paredoken; Rom 1:24, 26, 28). This sequence reflects a hardening of the heart before God, which precedes his handing them over to their own devices; as a result, the Gentiles are responsible and culpable before God." [Arnold, 283] "Sometimes the hardening is attributed to God (Exod 4.21; 10.20, 27; Dt 2.30) and sometimes it is regarded as self-inflicted (Exod 9.34f; 7.22; 8.15). [Paul] thus accuses pagans of the same hardness of which scripture often accuses the Jews. It is a quality which belongs to unbelieving people as people whether they are Jews or Gentiles." [Best, 421]



THE UNSAVED ARE CALLOUSED

v. 19 — **'who being past feeling' (KJV), 'they have become callous' (ESV) – οἵτινες ἀπηλγηκότες [hoitines apēlgēkotes]** — **'WHO, BEING PERSONS WHO, WHO ARE OF SUCH A NATURE ...'** — **Paul continues by describing who these people are by nature.** *"Who' is hoitines, a relative and indefinite pronoun showing character or nature, 'who are of such a nature that.'" [Wuest, 107] Wuest's translation: 'who, being of such a nature as to have become callous.' Abbott's translation: 'being persons who.' "The relative pronoun of quality [hoitines] ('being those who') may emphasize a characteristic quality by which the preceding statement is confirmed." [O'Brien, 322] **"The indefinite relative pronoun [hoitines] has its usual qualitative force indicating certain persons who belong to a certain class: 'such a one,' 'the kind who.'** **Before Paul begins a description of Gentile lifestyle, he enlarges a little more on their characteristics."** [Hoehner, 589]*

CALLOUSED, BEING PAST FEELING — ἀπηλγηκότες [apēlgēkotes] — literally, 'to give over feeling pain, to cease to feel pain or grief, having got over the pain, to be without feeling.' In this context, 'having lost all moral sensitivity' [Bruce, 354] **This is a rare word that does not appear in the LXX nor Josephus and occurs only here in the New Testament. In Greek literature written about the time of the NT the word may be found in two places.** [Arnold, 283; see also Hoehner, 589; Lincoln, 270] **"The thought of hardening their hearts continues in the statement that they have 'lost all sensitivity', a vivid classical term which literally could refer to skin that had become callous and no longer felt pain. Here it means to 'lose the capacity to feel shame or embarrassment', while the perfect tense describes a state of affairs that led to (or else accompanied) the loss of all self-control."** [O'Brien, 322] **"Expositors says: 'It expresses the condition, not of despair merely, but of moral insensibility, the deadness that supervenes when the heart has ceased to be sensible to the stimuli of the conscience.'" [Wuest, 107f] "[T]hat moral apathy and deadness which supervenes when the heart has ceased to be sensible of the 'stimuli' of the conscience." [Ellicott, 104] "The consciences of Gentiles do not stab them when they do wrong for they are insensitive in distinguishing what is morally good from what is evil. The thought is similar to that of 2.1 where Gentiles were regarded as dead." [Best, 421; see also Abbott, 131; Moule, 116; Salmond, 340; Lincoln, 270, 278; Eadie, 332; Hodge, 184]**

THEY HAVE REACHED A POINT THAT 'NOW THERE IS A HARD, IMPENETRABLE SHELL THAT RENDERS THEM INSENSITIVE TO GOD' — **Again, this is in the perfect tense implying a settled condition. "Paul uses an exceedingly rare word to characterize these people: they are 'callous'; that is, they have ceased to feel pain or become dead to feeling. The perfect tense suggests that they have reached this point, presumably after a period of rejecting God and his ways, and now there is a hard, impenetrable shell that renders them insensitive to God and describes their ongoing condition."** [Arnold, 283; see also Best, 421]

'PLEASURABLE EVIL IS A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS' — **"This rare verb occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It underlines the sense in which Gentiles have 'hardened hearts'. But there is a certain irony in its use in the present context: the sexual licence about to be described is not, whatever its participants may think, genuine indulgence in pleasure but a desensitizing to pain. In a religious ethic, goodness is the only true delight; pleasurable evil is a contradiction in terms."** [Muddiman, 213]

have given themselves up – ἑαυτοὺς παρέδωκαν [heautous paredōkan] — **‘THEMSELVES’ IS EMPHATIC** —

‘Themselves’ is emphatic by position. [Moule, 116] Themselves is placed *‘with frightful emphasis’* [Meyer, quoted by Ellicott, 104] *“[G]ave up themselves: with terrific emphasis.”* [Alford, 122] *“The reflexive pronoun (heautous) clarifies that this was not a condition thrust on them involuntarily; they became this way on their own volition. God has allowed them to pursue their own course and immerse themselves into a life of self-indulgence.”* [Arnold, 283; see also Hoehner, 590]

‘TO GIVE ALONGSIDE, DID GIVE OVER THEMSELVES’ — παρέδωκαν [paredōkan] — Wuest: *‘abandoned themselves.’* *“‘Have given themselves over’ is paradidōmi, literally, ‘to give alongside.’ Today we would say, ‘sell down the river.’ The verb means ‘to give into the hands of another, to betray, to hand over, give one’s self up, present one’s self.’”* [Wuest, 108] *“Lit., did give over themselves.... The perverted will is the traitor, the ‘giver over.’ However deep the mystery of its perversion, it is always the will, and speaks as such the decisive ‘yes’ to temptation.”* [Moule, 116]

PARADOX: WHILE AN ACT OF JUDGEMENT, IT IS MAN’S OWN CHOICE — In an act of eternal suicide, man *chooses* to fight against the will of God and face eternity without Him (separated in hell) rather than bow and submit to Him. *“We will not have this Man rule over us!”* (cp. Luke 19:14) Man would hate even heaven if taken there without the new birth given by the Holy Spirit! But paradoxically, in other places it is the hand of God that gives over the sinner to judgment. *“‘Being past feeling have given themselves over,’ unsusceptible of pain, and according to the context, in the heart, the moral consciousness, hence not feeling the unrest and punishment of conscience, the correction of God (Jer. v. 3), they have given themselves over.... Self-reprobation is consummated in becoming apathetic, just as Rom. i. 24: ‘God delivered them over, in the lusts of their hearts.’ Our passage marks the freedom and guilt of men, the passage in Romans the rule, will and power of God, but both of them indicate the means: the lust corrupting even unto want of feeling; here prominence is given to the consequence, the condition which has arisen and becomes aggravated, there to the ground, the active power (‘lusts’).”*

[Lange’s, 161] *“It is at once a guilty choice of men and a judicial act of God.”* [Salmond, 340] *“No outside power (God or Satan?) has inflicted their condition on them; they gave themselves up to it; the subject of [paredōkan] is here the Gentiles, unlike Rom 1.24, 26, 28 where it is God.... The variation between viewing the state of the Gentiles as their own fault or as inflicted on them from outside (2.2; 4.18) is similar to that in which believers at times see themselves as believing because of God’s action (1.4; 2.1a, 5, 13, etc.) and at other times as making their own decision (1.13). This, the interrelation of divine election and human choice, is a continuing theological problem; [Paul] tends to emphasise the former aspect though the change here from Rom 1.24 shows he realises it can be over-stressed.”* [Best, 421f] *“It accorded here with the hortatory object of the Apostle to bring into prominence that which happened on the side of their own free will. It is otherwise in Rom. i. 24, [paredōken autous ho theos, ‘God gave them over’]: and the two treatments of the fact are not inconsistent, but parallel, each having its vindication and its full truth in the pragmatism of the context.”* [Alford, 122] *“What is ascribed in Rom. i. 24 to God is ascribed here to themselves, in accordance with the hortatory purpose of the present passage, so as to fix attention on the part which they themselves had in the result.”* [Abbott, 132] *“In this depiction, the lack of moral feeling and discernment on the part of the Gentiles means an inability to exercise any restraint in their plunge into degrading activities.... The evil that characterizes their conduct is not some dark fate that has overtaken them without their consent.”* [Lincoln, 279] *“The two emphases are not contradictory: God gives men and women over to the debased behaviour which they gladly choose. In the human activity the divine judgment takes place, and it is at the same time a self-judgment.”* [O’Brien, 323] *“Self-abandonment to deeper sin is the Divine judicial penalty of sin.”* [Eadie, 332] *“The factors of corruption are three: God, who hardens (Exod. iv. 21; vii. 8; xiv. 4, 8; Jno. xii. 40; Rom. ix. 18; i. 24), man himself (1 Sam. vi. 6; Ps. xcvi. 8; Heb. iii. 8), the surrounding circumstances, through which and under which it takes place (Gen. vii. 13; viii. 15; Heb. iii. 13). According to the context man is here described as the cause of the corruption (ver. 19). because personal guilt and the evoking of self-activity is treated of, while in Rom. i. 24 God is termed the Author in the same matter, since there the final and deepest ground is touched upon.... What comes to pass is never loosed from the dealings of God and His holy rule, nor from the consent and opposition of man or without the influences of historical circumstances and persons. Consider, however, that thy guilt is at once God’s punishment and thine own guilt, and forget not that the two appear together as a developing history.”* [Lange’s, 165]

“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 two-fold 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.” [Hodge, 184f] *“This is not a contradiction of Rom 1:24, 26, 28 where God gives humans over to their immoral conduct because of their refusal to accept his revelation from heaven. Chrysostom tries to reconcile the two passages by saying that God permitted humans to be given over to immorality. However, in Romans the same verb is used as in the present context and it has no suggestion of permission. God is the subject of the verb; he handed them over. A better way to resolve the apparent contradiction is to consider that there are two stages: (1) people exercise their perversion of free will and give themselves over to sin, and (2) God’s response is then to give them over to the sin which will continue to enslave them.”*

[Hoehner, 590] *“When people continue in sin and turn themselves away from the life of God, they become apathetic and insensitive about moral and spiritual things. They reject all standards of righteousness and do not care about the consequences of their unrighteous thoughts and actions. Even conscience becomes scarred with tissue that is not sensitive to wrong (1 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:15). According to an ancient Greek story, a Spartan youth stole a fox but then inadvertently came upon the man from*

whom he had stolen it. To keep his theft from being discovered, the boy stuck the fox inside his clothes and stood without moving a muscle while the frightened fox tore out his vital organs. Even at the cost of his own painful death he would not own up to his wrong. Our wicked society is so determined not to be discovered for what it is that it stands unflinching as its very life and vitality is ripped apart by the sins and corruption it holds so dear. It has become callous both to the reality and to the consequences of sin, and will endure any agony rather than admit that its way of 'living' is the way of death. On the other hand, sins that were once hidden or excused are now indulged in openly and blatantly. Often not even the semblance of morality is maintained. When self-desire rules, indecency runs wild and proceeds to cauterize the conscience, the God-given warning light and pain center of the soul. Those who are dying are desensitized to that which is killing them — because they choose it that way. Even when held up shamefully in full view of the world, their sins are not recognized as sinful or as the cause of increasing meaninglessness, hopelessness, and despair (cf. Rom. 1:32).” [MacArthur, 170]

'THEY GIVE THEMSELVES OVER TO IMMORAL CONDUCT' DESCRIBED IN THREE WAYS

Paul gives three manners in which the heathen give themselves over to their immoral conduct.

“Insensitive to the distinctions required by true morality, unbelievers gave themselves up to sin; this is now described with three nouns whose precise meaning is difficult to tie down because each is used both in a wide sense, embracing a range of sins, and in a more restricted way of particular sins. The relation of the final noun to the preceding two is also difficult.” [Best, 422] Further will be said concerning Ernest Best’s observation when we get to the word *'greediness, covetousness.'* See below.

to lasciviousness, to wantonness, to lewdness, to sensuality – τῆ ἀσελείᾳ [tē aselgeia] — **NOT NECESSARILY SEXUAL BUT ALL REBELLION AGAINST RESTRAINT** — “The Gr. word occurs in N.T. 11 times. See e.g. Mar. vii. 22; Rom. xiii.13 (A.V., ‘wantonness’); Gal. v. 19. *The root-idea of the word is not specially fleshly impurity, but rebellion against restraint as such; petulance, wantonness as shewn e.g. in violence.*” [Moule, 116] “‘Lasciviousness’ is aselgeia, ‘wanton lawless insolence.’ *The aselgeia person is one who acknowledges no restraints, who dares whatsoever his caprice and wanton petulance may suggest. ‘Wantonness’ is the best word to describe it. The word speaks of a complete surrender to self.*” [Wuest, 108] **BDAG:** *‘lack of self-constraint which involves one in conduct that violates all bounds of what is socially acceptable, self-abandonment.’ Friberg Analytical Greek Lexicon:* *‘living without any moral restraint.’* “The term ... occurs quite frequently (Mark vii. 22; Rom. viii. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 21; Gal. v. 19; 1 Pet. iv. 3; 2 Pet. ii. 2, 7, 18; Jude 4), almost always in connection with sensual sins, *denoting, however, not special sin, but reckless, unbridled, extravagant and excessive character in general.... It is not to be limited to sensual lasciviousness.*” [Lange’s, 161f] “The first noun ἀσελείᾳ [tē aselgeia] has the idea of ‘licentiousness, undue freedom, freedom with no boundaries,’ referring to sensual appetites.... It is the performance of blatant acts with no consideration of personal standards or social sanctions. It is doing something openly with no shame. This word is found only two times in the LXX where it has reference to political excesses (3 Macc 2:26) and moral debauchery (Wis 14:26). In the NT it appears ten times, four times in Paul, and only here in Ephesians. It is used in connection with sexual lust (Mark 7:22; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19) and is connected with drunkenness (Rom 13:13; 1 Pet 4:3). Most of the time, however, it is used of the desire to perform unrestrained desires (2 Pet 2:2, 7, 18; Jude 4). It is this last category that best fits the word in the present context. *It is the practice of sin without concern as to what God or people think.*” [Hoehner, 590; see also Eadie, 332; Arnold, 283; Best, 422] “*‘Debauchery’ (Gk. [aselgeia] one of ‘the works of the flesh’ in Gal. 5:19.) is wantonness — vice that throws off all restraint and flaunts itself, ‘unawed by shame or fear,’ without regard for self-respect, for the rights and feelings of others, or for public decency.*” [Bruce, 356; see also O’Brien, 323] “*All people initially recognize at least some standard of right and wrong and have a certain sense of shame when they act against that standard. Consequently, they usually try to hide their wrongdoing. They may continually fall back into it but still recognize it as wrong, as something they should not be doing; and conscience will not let them remain comfortable. But as they continue to overrule conscience and train themselves to do evil and to ignore guilt, they eventually reject those standards and determine to live solely by their own desires, thereby revealing an already seared conscience. Having rejected all divine guidelines and protection, they become depraved in mind and give themselves over to sensuality. Such a person cares nothing about what other people think — not to mention about what God thinks — but only about what gratifies the cravings of his own warped mind. Ungodliness and its attendant immorality destroy the mind as well as the conscience and the spirit. Rejection of God and of His truth and righteousness finally results in what Paul refers to in Romans as a ‘depraved mind’ (1:28) — a mind that is no mind, that cannot reason, that cannot think clearly, that cannot recognize or understand God’s truth, and that loses contact with spiritual reality. In its extreme, the depraved mind loses contact with all reality. That is the mindlessness of the self-indulgent, profligate celebrity who loses his career, his sanity, and often his life because of wanton sensuality. When indecency becomes a way of life, every aspect of life is corrupted, distorted, and eventually destroyed.*” [MacArthur, 171]

to work, for the working, to practice, – εἰς ἐργασίαν [eis ergasian] — **SIN BECOMES ‘AN EARNEST PURSUIT, AN OCCUPATION’** — The word used here is not a verb but a noun, part of a prepositional phrase εἰς ἐργασίαν [eis ergasian], ‘to work, into work.’ The word means *‘work, labor, practice, trade, business.’* **BDAG:** *‘engagement in some activity or behavior with sustained interest, practice, pursuit.’* The emphasis therefore “*suggests the idea that they made a business of [uncleanliness].*” [Abbott, 132] “*The idea of business thus adheres to the word. The suggestion conveyed by it here is that sin becomes to the deliberate sinner an earnest pursuit, an occupation.*” [Moule, 116f] “Literally, ‘to a working.’ Vincent says, ‘In Acts 19:25, used of a trade.’ Not precisely in this sense here, yet with a shade of it. *They gave themselves up as to the prosecution of a business.*” [Wuest, 108] “The preposition [eis] denotes conscious direction or purpose, not accidental. The noun [ergasia] connotes *‘work, profession.’* It further suggests the idea of *‘exercise, practice’* of something.’ In the LXX it occurs forty-five times and in the canonical books it appears thirty-four times for five Hebrew words, half the times it translates [a

Hebrew word] meaning ‘*occupation, work, business*’ (1 Chr 9:13; 26:29; Ps 107:23 [LXX 106:23]). In the NT it appears six times and means ‘*profit, gains*’ (Acts 16:16, 19), ‘*business, occupation*’ (Acts 19:24, 25), and ‘*effort*’ (Luke 12:58). In the present context the concept of ‘*occupation*’ fits best but with the slightly different nuance of ‘*practice, behavior*.’ It conveys the idea of occupation which becomes practice.” [Hoehner, 590f] **“Ergasia (practice) can refer to a business enterprise, and that idea could apply here. The ungodly person often makes business out of every kind of impurity. A Christian leader commented some years ago that many of the books published in the United States today rival the drippings of a broken sewer. Yet pornography, prostitution, X-rated films, suggestive TV programs, and every kind of impurity form perhaps the largest industry in our country. The vast majority of it is open, unashamed, and legally protected. An article in Forbes magazine (Sept. 18, 1978, pp. 81-92) entitled ‘The X-Rated Economy’ began by stating the obvious — pornography is no longer an illegal business. The market for pornography is not confined to perverts or other emotional cripples. To the contrary, the largest part of the market is middle class people. In an increasingly permissive society those who enjoy pornography are free to revel in it. The surprising revelation was that, according to one official estimate, the nation’s pornographers do more than four billion dollars worth of business a year — more than the combined incomes of the often supportive movie and music industries! Other estimates place the total pornographic business — including a large segment of the burgeoning home video market — at three times that much.”** [MacArthur, 171f]

every kind of uncleanness, impurity – ἀκαθαρσίας πάσης [akatharsias pasēs] — Literally, ‘*worthless material, waste, ’ used of graves’ ‘decayed flesh.’* (Friberg’s Analytical Greek Lexicon) **BDAG:** ‘*any substance that is filthy or dirty, refuse; figuratively, a state of moral corruption.*’ **“Uncleanness: The connexion of the Gr. word is mainly with fleshly impurity, and so probably here. But it is not quite confined to this; one passage (1 Thess. ii. 3) giving the thought rather of ‘impure motives’ in the sense of insincerity.”** [Moule, 117] “[akatharsia, ‘impurity,’ in 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19. It is also used in polemic against false teachers in 2 Pet 2:2, 7; Jude 4. **The term encompasses generally riotous and excessive living, but frequently has unrestrained sexual behaviour in view. As in Rom 1:24-32, the abuse of sexuality is highlighted in illustrating the degradation resulting from failure to acknowledge the Creator.... Sexual immorality may well be primarily in view, but again the reference is not limited to this; [akatharsias pases], ‘all kinds of impurity,’ are included.”** [Lincoln, 279] “This term has a long history of usage in the OT, where it is used to describe anything that is ritually unclean. It is used extensively in the LXX of Leviticus to refer to the various items deemed unclean, such as dead bodies, a variety of different animals (pigs, reptiles. etc.), and menstrual blood. It is parallel to the word ‘common’ κοινός [koinos], which is used of anything that is ceremonially impure. These ritual laws are no longer valid under the new covenant. Jesus revealed that the real problem lies in the hearts of individuals and that what comes out of the heart is what defiles people (Matt 12:34; Mark 7:20). Thus, Paul speaks of the lusts of the heart as leading to impurity (Rom 1:24). Impurity is also one of the fruits of the evil inclination, that is, the flesh (Gal 5:19; see also Col 3:5). Impurity is the opposite of the holiness that God seeks in the lives of people (1 Thess 4:7).” [Arnold, 283f; see also O’Brien, 323; Hoehner, 591] “[akatharsia, ‘uncleanness’] also appears in vice catalogues (2 Cor 12.21; Gal 5.19; Col 3.5; Prov 6.16; Eph 5.3), sometimes in proximity to [aselgeia] (2 Cor 12.21; Gal 5.19); it is rare in classical Greek; in Leviticus (see especially ch. 15) it refers regularly to ritual uncleanness. Apart from this restricted use, in some of its scriptural occurrences its connotation appears to be sexual (especially Gal 5.19; Col 3.5) and this is also true when it appears by itself (1 Th 4.7; T Jud 14.5; Barn 10.8,18), though the reference may be more general (1 Th 2.3; Prov 6.16; Wisd 2.16; 3 Macc 2.17; T Levi 15.1). The phenomenon in which general moral terms are given a sexual orientation (‘she is an immoral woman’) appears in many cultures. There is nothing in the use of our two nouns to indicate a sexual orientation here. [pases] suggests a general meaning in respect of the second, ‘every kind of impurity’, though it could be ‘every kind of sexual deviation.’” [Best, 422f]

greediness, covetousness – ἐν πλεονεξία [en pleonexia] — **THE WORD ITSELF DEFINED** — as defined by **BADG**, ‘*the state of desiring to have more than one’s due, greediness, insatiableness, avarice, covetousness.*’ We tend to confine this word to the desire of money or property but this word includes much more than that. It is often connected with sexual impurity (1 Cor 5:11; 1 Thes 4:3-7 [a cognate of this word appears in v. 6]; Col 3:5; Eph 5:3, 5) but again, is more than what we would call sexual lust. Lightfoot, speaking on Col 3:5, says this word “never of itself denotes ‘lust’ while it is, of course, rightly used to denote the horrible grasp and plunder which lust involves.” [Moule, 117, quoting Lightfoot] Alford says “It is self-seeking, or greed: in whatever direction this central evil tendency finds its employment.” [Alford, 122] Chrysostom calls this vice ‘the greatest cause of evils and the greatest evil’. [Lincoln, 279] **Therefore in essence in this verse, it refers to the unsaved as living in excess but never being satisfied; their insatiable self-centered lust for more makes them oblivious of the needs of others and of the consequences for others. One commentator gave the illustration of a downward spiral, a vicious circle where new and worse perversions must be sought to replace the old.** [Lincoln, 279; see also O’Brien, 323; Hoehner, 591f; Best, 423; Abbott, 133f; Snodgrass, 231; MacArthur, 171; Hodge, 184; Lange’s, 162] **“The final prepositional phrase, ‘with an insatiable desire for more’, culminates this litany of features characterizing the self-seeking mind-set of the unbelieving Gentiles. This term, often translated ‘greed’ or ‘covetousness,’ indicates that such people are never satisfied with what they have. Jesus warned against this unrestrained appetite to acquire: ‘Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed (pleonexias); a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions’ (Luke 12:15). He taught that greed is one of the evils that comes out of the heart (Mark 7:22). Paul told the Colossians that it is one of the characteristics of the earthly nature and is something Christians need to fight against (Col 3:5; see also Eph 5:3; Did. 5:1).”** [Arnold, 284]

COVETOUSNESS IS IDOLATRY — “In all the literature it is a word that conveys unfavorable or undesirable characteristics, extreme selfishness, the opposite of moderation. In Col 3:5 it is identified as idolatry. When one covets a particular thing, that becomes the center of his or her life and is worshiped in place of the creator (Rom 1:23, 25).... The reason Christians are not to be covetous is because they must believe that God supplies their needs and that they have no need for what God has given to someone

else.” [Hoehner, 592]

HOW DOES PAUL USE THE WORD HERE? — As quoted above, **“Insensitive to the distinctions required by true morality, unbelievers gave themselves up to sin;** this is now described with three nouns whose precise meaning is difficult to tie down because each is used both in a wide sense, embracing a range of sins, and in a more restricted way of particular sins. The relation of the final noun to the preceding two is also difficult.” [Best, 422] The words Ernest Best refers to are the following:

to lasciviousness

into the work of uncleanness

in all greed, covetousness

As we will see below in more detail, the final noun could be used as a ‘third vice’ or it could be used to qualify the other two vices. The majority of the translations of which I refer used this final noun to qualify the other nouns (note there are some minor word variances in the following translations but the sense is the same):

given themselves over to lasciviousness

to work all uncleanness

with greediness (Tyndale, Geneva, KJV, RV, ASV, RSV, NKJV, NASV, ESV)

The only major translation to which I checked to differ from the majority is the NIV:

‘Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.’ (NIV) *Note this is not a change in the original text but an opinion on how Paul uses this final noun.*

In support of the final noun being used as a separate vice, F. F. Bruce says the following: “As for ‘covetousness,’ it appears as the climax of that list; a further warning against it comes in Eph. 5:5 (where it forms the climax of a similar list). It is possible to take the word here as qualifying the practice of the previously mentioned vices: ‘greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness’ (RSV). But more probably it is listed as a third vice in itself, alongside debauchery and impurity.” [Bruce, 356] Charles Hodge agrees: “They, therefore, give themselves up *to excess*, to practise all kinds of uncleanness, ἐν πλεονεξία [en pleonexia], *with greediness*, i. e. insatiably. The parallel passage, 2 Pet. ii. 14, ‘Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin,’ would favour this interpretation so far as the idea is concerned. But the word πλεονεξία [en pleonexia] always elsewhere means ‘covetousness’ — ‘a desire to have more.’ And as this gives a good sense it is not right to depart from the established meaning.” [Hodge, 184]

However most of the commentators I have used support the translations; e.g., **“People like them, because they are callous, have given themselves over to self-indulgence to accomplish every form of impurity with an insatiable desire for more.”** [Arnold, 283] Peter O’Brien translates the verse as follows: *‘they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.’* [O’Brien, 317] “Although it is possible to understand ‘greed’ as a third vice, alongside debauchery and impurity, the prepositional expression ‘with covetousness’ suggests that the indecent conduct already described was practised *with a continual lust for more*. The pagan way of life was characterized by an insatiable desire to participate in more and more forms of immorality.” [O’Brien, 323]

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

I started by stating we were to live worthy of that calling to salvation by which we were called by the Holy Spirit. What follows therefore are some of the ways in which we are to do this. I am solemnly declaring in the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you no longer order your lives as the heathen around you:

their thinking if false, empty, purposeless, pointless; they live in an illusion that finds pleasure in sin, all their rational powers are wasted on worthless objects. The world they (we) live in is good but because they do not know God, they do not understand the world nor do they even understand themselves.

*being those who have had their understanding **darkened** in time past and are now in a settled and permanent state of blindness, and thus are incapable of grasping the truths of God and His gospel.*

*being those who have been alienated, **separated**, cut off from the life that comes from God in time past and are now in a permanent state of spiritual death. This was not because of something external but rather of their own wilful ignorance which arose from their hearts being hardened as a stone.*

*being those who are **calloused**, past feeling pain, their hearts insensitive to shame or embarrassment. They themselves did give themselves over to rebellion against any form of restraint, completely surrendered to self;*

earnestly pursuing as if making a business of all kinds of fleshly impurity: general riotous and excessive living, especially in regards to unrestrained sexual behaviour;

having an insatiable desire for more, oblivious to the needs of others or the consequences to others.