
The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis
LESSON CVI : FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT (5:3-14)

From Darkness to Light (5:3-14) — Six Commands

As mentioned in the first lesson on this passage, we will be looking at this by focusing upon the six continued-action commands (present tense imperatives) within this passage:

- v. 3 'be named' — 'let it not even be named among you'
- v. 6 'be deceived' — 'let no one deceive you with vain words'
- v. 7 'become' — 'do not become partakers with them'
- v. 8 'walk' — 'walk as children of light'
- v. 11 'have fellowship, participate' — 'have no fellowship with darkness'
- v. 11 'reprove' — 'but rather reprove them'

Verse 7 appears to be a transitional verse, serving both what comes before and gliding into what follows. Here is a look at this passage, highlighting Paul's continued-action commands (using Young's Literal Translation as a basis):

³ LET IT NOT EVEN BE NAMED AMONG YOU, as becometh saints;

whoredom, and all uncleanness, or covetousness,

⁴ also filthiness, and foolish talking, or jesting, — the things not fit —

but rather thanksgiving;

[Why?] ⁵ for this ye know, that every whoremonger, or unclean, or covetous person, who is an idolater, hath no inheritance in the reign of the Christ and God.

⁶ LET NO ONE DECEIVE YOU WITH VAIN WORDS,

[Why?] for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of the disobedience,

⁷ BECOME NOT, THEN, PARTAKERS WITH THEM,

⁸ WALK YE AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT,

for ye were once darkness, and now light in the Lord;

[Parenthetical comment on the light] ⁹ for the fruit of the light [Spirit] is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth,

¹⁰ proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord,

¹¹ HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF THE DARKNESS

BUT RATHER EVEN REPROVE THEM, EXPOSE THEM,

[Why?] ¹² for the things in secret done by them it is a shame even to speak of,

¹³ and all the things reprov'd by the light are manifested, for everything that is manifested is light; ¹⁴ wherefore he saith,

'Arouse thyself, thou who art sleeping,

and arise out of the dead,

and the Christ shall shine upon thee.'

TWO COMMANDS AND THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

We have looked at Paul's first command and the sins relating to that command. In this lesson we will look at the next two commands with warnings of the judgment of God. "Two warnings, which are meant to provide motivation to take note of the prohibitions, follow in vv 5, 6. ***Fornicators and impure and covetous persons are excluded from the kingdom of Christ and God. In fact, such disobedient outsiders will also experience the wrath of God. No one, therefore, should be misled by those who claim that one's sexual activities are a matter of indifference. Such a claim could not be further from the truth, for God's judgment will fall on all sinful conduct.***" [Lincoln, 333]

THE FIRST DESCRIPTION OF THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

v. 5 — **For this you know, for certainly know this, for be very sure of this, of this you are well aware,** — τοῦτο γὰρ ἴστε γινώσκοντες [touto gar iste ginōskontes] — **‘FOR, BECAUSE ...’** — The conjunction ‘for’ serves two purposes: first, Paul is going to confirm something they already know; and secondly, Paul is going to give the reason for the first command, ‘do not let these sins even be named amongst you...’. The ‘thing they know’ refers to the content which follows.

TWO WORDS FOR ‘KNOWING’ USED HERE, DRAWING ATTENTION TO THE CERTAINTY OF WHAT PAUL IS SAYING — Paul uses a strange, unparalleled construction here, combining two words for ‘knowing’ (‘iste’ = 2nd person plural indicative of ‘oīda’ meaning ‘to know, to have information about, to be intimately acquainted with or stand in a close relation to’ [BDAG] + ‘ginōskontes’ = present participle of ‘ginōskō’ meaning ‘to know, to arrive at a knowledge of someone or something, to make acquaintance of, to acquire information through some means, to learn, to ascertain, to find out’) [BDAG]. Clinton Arnold translates this literally as ‘you know this because you know that ...’. [Arnold, 324]. T. K. Abbott translates it as ‘ye know full well, of your own knowledge’. [Abbott, 150] Rather than translate the redundancy, most translations and commentators believe it better to express the emphasis Paul is placing upon what his Ephesian readers know:

‘for this ye know of a surety’ (RV, ASV)

‘for this you know with certainty’ (NASV), ‘you certainly know this’ (Hoehner)

‘for this you can be sure’ (NIV), ‘for you may be sure of this’ (ESV, O’Brien)

‘you know very well’ (F. F. Bruce)

‘be well assured of this’ (F. F. Bruce), ‘be sure of this’ (RSV, translating the verb as an imperative (command) which is possible)

“It is clear that Paul is restating a truth he had taught the Ephesians many times while he pastored among them and, no doubt, one that others had reinforced. For this you know with certainty, he said. There should have been no doubt or confusion in their minds about what he was about to say, because it was nothing new.” [MacArthur, 202] “Believers are unlike those still trapped in a lifestyle characterized by sin; the redeemed now have an inheritance in the kingdom. This is something they undoubtedly learned in the teaching they received after their conversion and that Paul has reaffirmed for them in the first part of this letter (esp. in chs. 1-3).” [Arnold, 323; for references to the verbiage used by Paul, see Arnold, 323f; Lincoln, 316; Hoehner, 659; O’Brien, 362; Moule, 129; Bruce, 371]

TRIAD OF SINS APPLIED TO THOSE WHO HABITUALLY INDULGE IN THOSE SINS — that no fornicator, that no whoremonger, that no one who is unchaste, anyone who is sexually immoral — ὅτι πᾶς πόρνος [hoti pas pornos] — unclean person, impure — ἡ ἀκάθαρτος [ē akathartos] — nor covetous man, or greedy, or greedy person — ἡ πλεονέκτης [ē pleonektēs] — Paul now writes of three types of sinners of which we ‘know with a certainty’ will not partake of the heavenly kingdom, taking the first triad of sins mentioned in v. 3 and personalizing them, even in the same order:

THE SIN (v. 3)

πορνεία [porneia] ‘fornication, whoredom, sexual immorality’

ἀκαθαρσία [akatharsia] ‘uncleanness, impurity’

πλεονεξία [pleonexia] ‘greed, covetousness’

THE SINNER (v. 5)

πόρνος [pornos] ‘fornicator, whoremonger, sexually immoral person’

ἀκάθαρτος [akathartos] ‘unclean or impure person’

πλεονέκτης [pleonektēs] ‘covetous or greedy person’

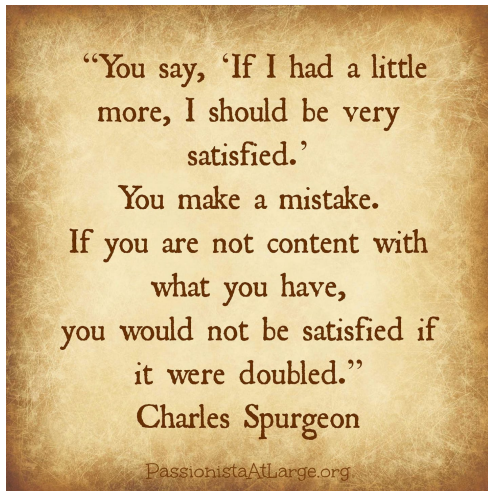
Paul is not referring to believers who lapse into sinful behavior but rather those whose lifestyle is characterized by these sins. For Paul, a believer is no longer ‘one who is sexually immoral’ (v. 5a), ‘one who is an ‘impure person’ (v. 5b) or ‘one who is covetous’ (v. 5c) but rather ‘one who has been set apart for God and whose life is therefore holy’ (v. 3b). **Nevertheless, Paul knows even believers can and do engage in impure behaviors; his point however is that these evil attitudes and conduct should be rooted out and eliminated.** “This is not to say that a believer might not fall into one of these sins, but rather this concerns the person who is characterized by one or more of these sins. Conversely, a criminal may do a good deed, but this is not what characterizes him.” [Hoehner, 660; see also Arnold, 324; Best, 480; O’Brien, 362; Moule, 129] John MacArthur:

“Persons who are characterized by the sins Paul has just condemned in verses 3 and 4 will have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. No person whose life pattern is one of habitual immorality, impurity, and greed can be a part of God’s kingdom, because no such person can belong to Him. Such would contradict the truths of Romans 6 and 2 Corinthians 5:17, as well as the instruction of 1 John regarding the characteristics of believers. The life described here testifies to an unredeemed, sinful nature – no matter what relationship to Christ a person might claim to have. God’s children have God’s nature, and the habitually sinful person proves that he does not have a godly nature (1 John 3:9-10). The kingdom of Christ and God refers to the sphere of salvation, the community of the redeemed and the place of eternal glory.

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age’ (Titus 2:11-12). Every person who is saved, and is therefore a part of that glorious rule of Christ and God, is instructed by the Holy Spirit and by the inclination of his new nature to forsake sin and to seek righteousness. The person whose basic life pattern does not reflect that orientation cannot claim God as his Father or the kingdom of Christ and God as his inheritance.

“It is dangerously deceptive for Christians to try to give assurance of salvation to someone who has no biblical grounds for such assurance. In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul gives an even more detailed listing of sins whose habitual practice proves a person is not saved and has no claim on God. ‘Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God’ (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Such things do not characterize the children of God (cf. Gal. 5:17-21 for a similar insight). The verdict of God is that, no matter what may be the claim, a life dominated by sin like this is damned to hell.” [MacArthur, 202f]

ARE THESE WHO PRACTICE SUCH THINGS THEREFORE WITHOUT HOPE? — *“As for the practitioners of the vices mentioned in v. 3, they have no part or lot in the heavenly kingdom. They are not, indeed, left without hope; the gate of repentance stands open. But those who persist in such practices – even if, by some mischance, they bear the Christian name – show thereby that they are excluded from eternal life. Paul found it necessary to warn his converts repeatedly about this. He reminds the Corinthians that ‘the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God,’ and spells out what is meant by ‘the unrighteous’ by listing practitioners of ten vices (including the three mentioned in Eph. 5:3, 5) whose way of life debars them from the kingdom. He adds a note of hope, however: ‘And such were some of you,’ he says; ‘but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God’ (1 Cor. 6:9-11). But the fact that they still have to be warned against such vices shows how strong, in a pagan environment, was the temptation to indulge in them even after conversion.” [Bruce, 371]*

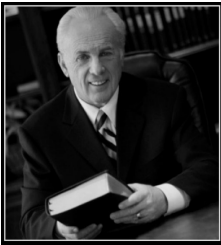


PARENTHETIC COMMENT: ‘IDOLATER’ REFERS TO ‘COVETOUS PERSON’ ONLY — **who is an idolater, such a person is an idolater,** — ὅς ἐστιν εἰδωλολάτρης [hos estin eidōlatrēs] — Almost everyone I read consider ‘who is an idolater’ to refer to the last type of sinner only, ‘the covetous man’ since the relative pronoun is singular. Paul consistently uses the singular neuter relative pronoun when referring to one item in the previous context (e.g., 6:17) but when describing a series of nouns will use the plural neuter pronoun (e.g., Col 2:17, 22). This is further supported by the parallel passage in Col 3:5 where Paul does the same thing, only this time with another singular relative pronoun. [Arnold, 324; see also Best, 481; Lincoln, 316f; 324; Hoehner, 660f; Moule, 129; O’Brien, 362f; Bruce, 372; Eadie, 375; MacArthur, 202; Wiersbe, 45] *“To covet is idolatry. That which is coveted becomes the center of one’s life and is worshiped instead of the Creator (Rom 1:23). The greedy person is willing to exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for a corruptible idol (Rom 1:25). This is a flawed perspective. For example, Esau was so covetous of the pottage that he sold his birthright — a ten-minute transaction in exchange for a life’s inheritance!” [Hoehner, 660f] “The covetous man makes a god of his*

possessions, and offers to them the entire homage of his heart. That world of which the love and worship fill his nature, is his god, for whose sake he rises up early and sits up late.” [Eadie, 375] “The description of a greedy person as an idolater is not surprising in spite of the fact that Ephesus and its environs abounded with the images of gods and goddesses. Paul was not the first to make this connection; it was common in Judaism. One Jewish writer says, ‘My children, love of money leads to idolatry, because once they are led astray by money, they designate as gods those who are not gods’ (T. Jud. 19:1). Philo of Alexandria sharply criticized the ‘money lovers’ who would ‘procure gold and silver coins from every side and treasure their hoard like a divine image in a sanctuary, believing it to be a source of blessing and happiness of every kind’ (Philo, Spec. Laws 1.23). In fact, Jesus himself personified money with the word ‘Mammon’ and warned, ‘No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money’ (Matt 6:24; see also Luke 16:13).” [Arnold, 324]

THIS CONTRAST IS BETWEEN BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS — **does not have an inheritance in the kingdom,** — οὐκ ἔχει κληρονομίαν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ [ouk echei klēronomian en tē basileia] — *“Paul claims that those whose lives are characterized by these vices will not have a share in the kingdom. Paul has already made it clear, however, that believers will have an inheritance with God because they have been sealed by the Spirit (1:13). He, in fact, prays that they will become increasingly aware of their identity as heirs (1:18). This clause (4:5b) does not, then, function as a warning to believers that they should beware of their actions lest they forfeit their inheritance. It has the exact opposite force. Paul wants them to be assured that they are heirs of the eternal kingdom. Because of that, they should now live like kingdom people and serve their loving and merciful God with a heart full of gratitude.” [Arnold, 325] “It is certain that persistent sinners like the immoral, impure, and greedy have no part or lot in God’s heavenly kingdom. Believers have already been assured that they have a secure hope of inheriting the glorious life to come (1:14,18). But they are here warned not to live like unbelievers, for they are not going to inherit the kingdom of Christ and of God. Those who have given themselves over to immorality, impurity, and*

greed, even if they call themselves Christian, show that they are excluded from eternal life. The apostle is not asserting that the believer who ever falls into these sins is automatically excluded from God's kingdom. Rather, what is envisaged here is the person who has given himself or herself up without shame or repentance to this way of life. Paul finds it necessary to warn his converts repeatedly about this. He reminds the Corinthians that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God, and then proceeds to describe this unrighteous behaviour in the list of ten vices that follow (1 Cor. 6:9-10; cf. Gal. 5:21). Some of the Corinthians have lived like this in the past. But they have been washed, sanctified, and justified (v. 11)." [O'Brien, 363] "[Paul] assumes that his readers are not among such people. To describe this verses therefore, as a warning to believers that they can lose their salvation does not do justice to its function in the context. It provides a further motivation for the readers not even to mention these vices, namely, that those who actually perpetrate them are in a realm totally antithetical to the kingdom of Christ and God." [Lincoln, 325] "The term 'inheritance' ... refers to the eternal inheritance that does not belong to the sinner but to the saint. This inheritance is obtained as a result of redemption and is not a future reward contingent on faithfulness. The contrast in this passage is between those who inherit and those who receive the wrath of God, not between faithful and unfaithful disciples. It is a contrast between heaven and hell and not a comparison of degree.... The people described in this verse have no inheritance. This corresponds with other thoughts by Paul on the same subject. He states in Gal 5:19-21 that those who do works of the flesh such as sexual immorality, impurity, and idolatry will not inherit the kingdom of God. Likewise in 1 Cor 6:9-10 the unrighteous — the immoral, idolaters, thieves, and the greedy — will not inherit the kingdom of God. The Corinthian believers were counted among them before they were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God (v. 11)... Hence, the kingdom of God is not for saints who have never sinned but for sinners who have been redeemed by Christ's supreme sacrifice (Eph 1:7, 14; 2:4-10; 4:32). Here in Ephesians Paul, addressing believers, rightly assumes that they have inherited the kingdom of God. However, Paul warns that those whose lives are characterized by immorality, impurity, and greed, even though they may claim to be Christians, are not included in the kingdom of God." [Hoehner, 661f] "Into Christ's kingdom the fornicator and sensualist cannot come; for, unsanctified and unprepared, they are not susceptible of its spiritual enjoyments, and are filled with antipathy to its un fleshly occupations; and specially into God's kingdom 'the covetous man, who is an idolater,' cannot come, for that God is not his god, and disowning the God of the kingdom, he is self-excluded. As his treasure is not there, so neither there could his heart find satisfaction and repose." [Eadie, 376f] "[N]ot so much, 'has no inheritance, and shall have none', as 'has no inheritance, and can have none;' compare ver. 6, and Col. iii. 6." [Ellicott, 120]



"Nothing is more spiritually deadly than false assurance of salvation."

John MacArthur

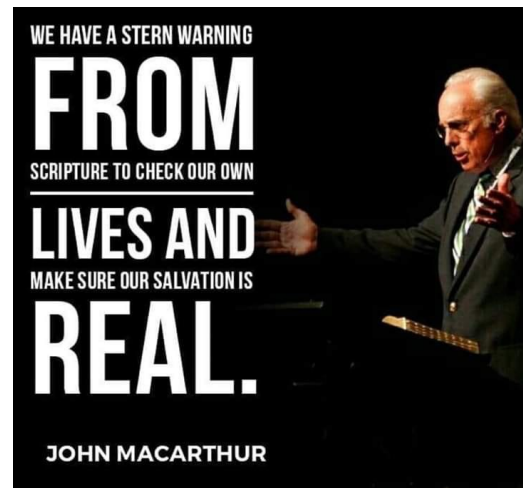
THE BALANCE BETWEEN 'PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS' AND 'PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS' —

Most discussions regarding eternal security are over-simplistic and therefore often misunderstood. One extreme is to teach that as long as a person has 'accepted Christ into his heart' then that person may live a sinful life yet have assurance of heaven. The other extreme is to teach there is no eternal security and a true believer may 'fall away eternally'

and lose the salvation in Christ they once had. Both extremes are errors. Scriptures teach a balance between 'the preservation of the saints' and 'the perseverance of the saints.' Below are some discussion points in an attempt to 'walk the balance' to that which is paradoxical to our minds:

- **A believer's assurance does not come from man but from the Holy Spirit.** When I was first saved I was taught how to lead a person to Christ using the 'Roman's road.' After having led the 'new convert' in prayer we were to immediately direct them to Romans 10:13, 'For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' We were to tell the 'new convert' that because they had 'called upon the name of the Lord' they were to never doubt they were going to heaven. I believe what follows refutes that teaching.
- **While a true believer may fall into sin, a true believer will not fall away permanently to his destruction.** So I do believe the Word of God teaches eternal security, the key words in that sentence being that they are a 'true believer.' But is that a subjective self-judgment that in essence merely repeats the error of directing the 'new convert' to Romans 10:13? No, I believe this shifts the focus to where it should be. The question is not, 'Can a true believer be lost?' The Scripture clearly teaches they cannot. But the question we should be asking is this, 'What does the Scripture teach regarding who is a true believer?' To answer that question with, 'I have called upon the name of the Lord (Rom 10:13)' and rely upon that alone is to place one's confidence in the wrong place. The more correct response should be, 'Do I meet the Scriptural description of who a true believer is, as evidenced by my lifestyle?' This is what we will be discussing below.

- **Scripture clearly warns there will be those who profess to follow Christ yet are never truly in the kingdom of**



heaven, therefore anyone placing their hope of eternity in a single past act without a changed lifestyle following that profession of faith could very easily be self-deceived. The clearest teaching on this came from the lips of our Master Himself: *'Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* (Matt 7:21-23) Several points: (1) merely *'calling on the name of the Lord'* (as mentioned in our first point) does not guarantee that one has truly believed with the entirety of his being and entered the kingdom of heaven; (2) one who truly is in the kingdom of heaven will demonstrate their faith in active obedience to the demands of Scripture; (3) one may be outwardly religious yet not be in the kingdom, living a life of self-deception.

- **A continual openly sinful lifestyle described by Paul in Ephesians 5:5 (along with other verses throughout the NT) is evidence of one who is not now nor ever has been a true believer, regardless of any profession of faith.** Paul warns in these verses of *'not being part of the kingdom of God'* (v. 5) and of being objects of *'the wrath of God'* (v. 6). Is that to agree then with the teaching that a true believer may fall away eternally? The Apostle John says that is impossible: *'They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.'* (1 John 2:19) Two points worth highlighting: (1) a true believer, one who *'had been of us'*, will continue to be amongst the congregation of the faithful; and (2) those who went out were merely manifesting they were *'never one of us.'*

- **Scripture does not lull us into false security but rather warns professing believers to examine their profession to see if they are truly in the faith.** Some examples:

'Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.' (2 Pet 1:10,11)

'Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you fail to meet the test!' (2 Cor 13:5 ESV)

- **The Scriptures are clear concerning the cost of being a follower of Jesus Christ.** This *'Americanized gospel'* where someone comes to Christ and all their problems are over, being guaranteed heaven regardless of their lifestyles is not found in Scripture. A warning from our Master Himself:

'Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, "Strive [ἀγωνίζεσθε, agōnizesthe; used of an athlete in a contest or a warrior in a fight or struggle] to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.'" (Luke 13:23,24) What follows in Luke's passage is a parallel to the warnings of Christ in Matt 7 above.

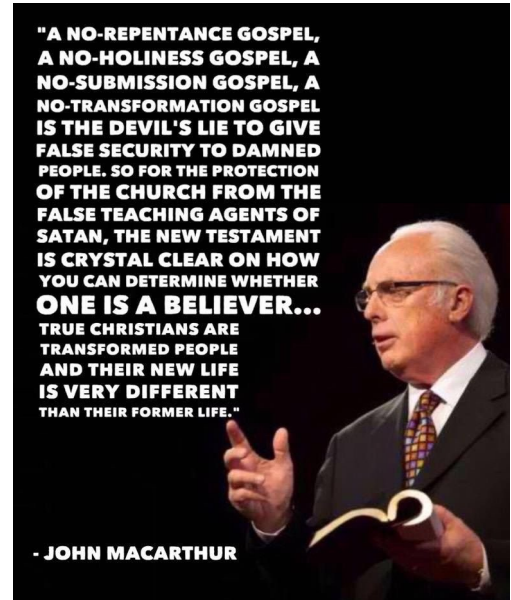
So from the very beginning of our salvation (*'entering the narrow gate'*) there is a lifelong spiritual battle for those who belong to the Lord. But some respond by stating it is possible to believe in Christ for salvation (*'praying the prayer'* then never doubting on the basis of Rom 10:13) and not be a *'disciple.'* They argue many are *'carnal Christians'* and will go to heaven even though their lives have never changed, although at some later time some of these *'carnal Christians'* may indeed make *'Christ their Lord'* and begin to actually live for Christ. Yet the New Testament makes it clear that all who belong to Christ is a disciple, a follower of Jesus on the *'narrow way.'* Those on the *'wide way'* are on a road of destruction, regardless of their profession.

'And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.'" (Acts 14:21,22)

Paul and Barnabas exhorts the believers in these verses in Acts of the lifelong cost of belonging to Jesus Christ.

- **Scripture warns professing believers against falling away from the faith, indicating that *'the saints will persevere until the end.'*** The book of Hebrews is full of such warnings:

'Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him' (Heb 2:1-3)

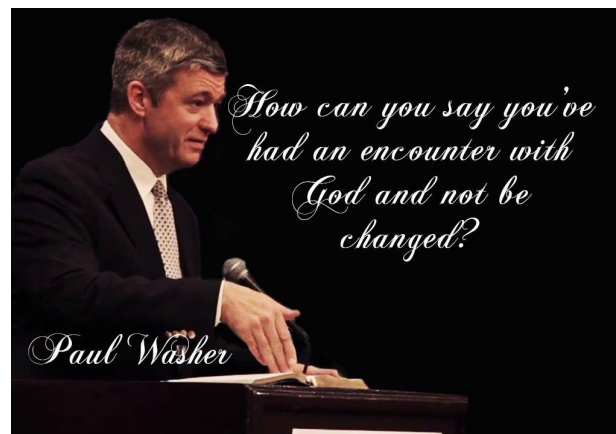


'Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."' (Heb 3:12-15)

'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.' (Heb 6:4-8)

A side note on those last verses in Hebrews 6: If one reads commentators from those who believe in eternal security, inevitably the entirety of their teaching on these verses will be to explain how such a one was never truly saved. I too made similar comments when questioned about the meaning of these verses. That changed years ago when I was attending Sunday School and the teacher began by stating, *'Does Scripture contradict itself? (no, they do not!) Does Scripture teach eternal security? (yes, they do!) Therefore instead of trying to excuse these verses or trying to make them fit within our eternal security doctrine, let us rather see what the author was trying to say without manipulating his arguments.'* He then taught what I am attempting to teach: *'Yes, those truly born again are eternally secure but we had better examine ourselves to make sure we are truly born again and not one of the self-deceived!'* I believe that is the teaching of the New Testament taken as a whole and deniers cannot 'cherry-pick' and isolate certain verses from the whole in an effort to refute this teaching.

● **The whole argument supporting church discipline is dependent upon the believer's lifestyle being different than the world's lifestyle.** Our churches' memberships are to consist of true believers only (any may visit even on a regular basis but voting and decisions are to be made by the membership of that church only). Since we as humans cannot see the hearts of others, the only evidence that can be provided for saving faith is that of a lifestyle consistent with the profession of faith. Someone professing saving faith yet having a life characterized by open sin without repentance is therefore to be removed from church membership, not to take away their salvation if they are truly believers but rather to make a declaration stating they are not giving evidence of having saving faith. The goal is to ultimately see that person repent and return rather than ostracizing them.



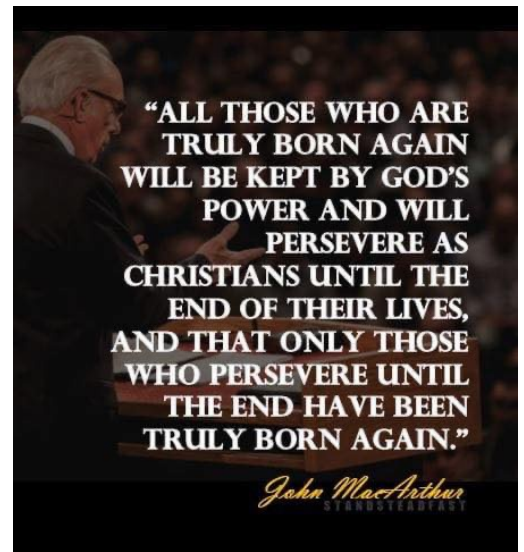
● **Against the arguments to the contrary, this is not teaching works for salvation.** I have many friends who still hold to the teaching I mentioned in my first point: that *'after a single prayer, Romans 10:13 guarantees that person salvation and they are never to doubt nor question their salvation according to that promise, regardless of how that person may live.'* I believe I have presented Scriptural proofs that should have laid that position to rest or at the very minimum make anyone holding that position question their original premise. But without exception every one of my friends with whom I have discussed what I just presented have responded, *'But that is to teach works for salvation.'* So to clarify: Scripture makes it very clear no one who has ever lived will ever have their sins forgiven based upon anything of their own personal merit. As Jonathan Edwards said, the only thing any person contributes to our salvation is the sin that made salvation necessary. But any sinner convicted of their sins by the Holy Spirit and understands it is not on their merit in any sense, will repent of their sins and surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ as their Master and Guide for the rest of their lives will have their sins forgiven. This is not based upon their faith or on their prayer but upon the merits of what Jesus Christ did for them in His sinless life and His sacrificial death on their behalf. Now after having repented of their sins and surrendering to the leadership of the Lord for their lives, their lives will be different. Their lives will never be perfect nor will anything they do thereafter contribute to their salvation (since the forgiveness of their sins are based upon the merits of the perfect Son of God) but their lives will be changed, as a business under new management can expect to be different. Anyone who has 'prayed their prayer' but never sees any change in their behavior or receive discipline when they disobey (Heb 12:5-11) should question if they have truly ever believed and trusted Christ alone for their salvation. No works for their salvation, just a changed life as evidence of their salvation.

"Surely no rebel can expect the King to pardon his treason while he remains in open revolt. No one can be so foolish as to imagine the Judge of all the earth will put away our sins if we refuse to put them away ourselves."
C.H. Spurgeon



In summation:

- Those truly born again will be *preserved* to the end of their lives, being kept by the power of the Holy Spirit. Those being preserved will evidence their faith by *persevering* in the Christian faith to the end of their lives.
- Persevering to the end involves active choices on our part as His children. The Christian life is not passive, ‘letting go and let God’ without active acts of obedience on our part.
- If one professes faith in Christ and lives in accordance to His will with repentance where that person fails, they have every Scriptural right to assurance of their salvation. And the Lord would desire us to have the peace of that assurance. (1 John 5:13)
- If one professes faith in Christ but knowingly, willingly and without repentance lives in open sin, that person has no Scriptural right to assurance of salvation but rather should greatly fear and question their salvation.
- As believers we have a Scriptural responsibility to care for others and if a brother is living in open sin without repentance, we should lovingly, meekly and humbly come along side to help that brother back to the right path, considering ourselves lest we are tempted in like manner. (Gal 6:1)
- As a church body of believers, we have a Scriptural responsibility to do all we are able to bring an erring brother back into a proper relationship with our Lord and Master, and if those efforts fail, we have a Scriptural responsibility to set that brother outside of the church body.



of Christ and God, — τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ [tou christou kai theou] — While this unique phrase is found only here, there are approximately similar phrases found elsewhere in the NT:

‘He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son’ (Col 1:13 ESV)

‘Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father’ (1 Cor 15:24a,b NKJV)

‘Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’ (Rev 11:15)

“In the NT the kingdom of God is mentioned in sixty-five verses (e.g., Matt 12:28; 19:24; 21:31; Acts 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; 6:9-10; 15:50; Gal 5:21; Col 4:11; 2 Thess 1:5) and the kingdom associated with Christ occurs at least ten times (Matt 16:28; Luke 1:33; 22:29, 30; 23:42; John 18:36; Col 1:13; 2 Tim 4:1, 18; 2 Pet 1:11), but **only in the present verse are the two persons of the Godhead mentioned together in relation to the kingdom. Furthermore, it is interesting to notice that Christ is mentioned before God.**” [Hoehner, 661; see also Best, 482; Lincoln, 325; O’Brien, 364; Moule, 129f; Bruce, 372]

TWO ASPECTS OF THE KINGDOM: PRESENT & FUTURE — *“There are two aspects of the kingdom. First, there is the present dimension. Paul states in Col 1:13 that we have been delivered from the authority of darkness to the kingdom of his beloved Son, and later in 4:10-11 he speaks of his coworkers for the kingdom of God. Second, there is also the future dimension where in the end Christ will hand the kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor 15:24).”* [Hoehner, 662] “The ‘kingdom of God’ was the central theme of the teaching of Jesus in his earthly ministry and held a prominent place in the proclamation of the early church as represented in the book of Acts. It is noteworthy that Acts begins with Jesus explaining the kingdom of God to his disciples after his resurrection (Acts 1:3) and ends with Paul boldly proclaiming the kingdom of God in Rome (28:31). Throughout these passages there is a dual emphasis on the present realization of the kingdom, but also the anticipation of a full manifestation of the kingdom in the future. When Paul explains the nature of the kingdom to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15:20-28, esp. 24), he suggests that there are two stages. (1) The present reign of Christ, in which he redeems a people for himself and empowers them in their struggle against the supernatural enemies (sin, flesh, the world, the evil spiritual powers, and death). At the end of Christ’s present reign, he will completely and finally defeat the rebellious principalities and powers and present his kingdom to the Father. (2) This act will usher in the future and final manifestation of the kingdom of God, when believers receive their full inheritance (Eph 1:14) and enjoy living in the presence of the Father and the Son.” [Arnold, 325] “The present tense of [‘has’] coheres with [Paul’s] realised eschatology, indicating that believers have already entered upon their inheritance just as they have already risen with Christ and sit with him in the heavenlies (2.6). Yet this cannot be pushed too far for inheritance is something which by its nature can only belong to the future. This may then represent another aspect of the tension between realised and future soteriology we have seen elsewhere in Ephesians.” [Best, 481f] “[Inheritance] conveys regularly the thought of possession by title, whether actually enjoyed or in prospect. An ‘inheritor’ may be thus either a present occupant, or an expectant ‘heir,’ as context may indicate. Here probably the expected possession of glory is mainly in view, though we cannot exclude some reference to the organic antecedent to glory — the present possession of ‘life eternal.’” [Moule, 129; see also Abbott, 151]

THIS IS NOT AN EXAMPLE OF THE ‘GRANVILLE SHARP RULE’ — There is in the NT Greek a grammatical structure called the ‘*Granville Sharp Rule*’ (important in John 1:1). Essentially it involves the author expressing a single idea by the use of two words connected with ‘and’ (the actual rule is much more involved but this suffices for our present study). This is important since several of these passages strongly emphasize the deity of Christ; e.g.,

‘looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ’ (Titus 2:13 NKJV)

So while we would emphatically stress the Deity of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, most of the commentators believe this verse is not an example of the ‘*Granville Sharp Rule*.’ “When the copulative [kai] connects two singular nouns (adjectives or participles) of the same case with an articular first noun and an anarthrous second noun, the person of the two nouns is the same person. The second noun further describes the first-named person. This is called Granville Sharp’s rule and it can be used to defend the deity of Christ. However, the force of this rule is somewhat blunted here because [theos] is frequently without an article and occurs without it in [basileian theou] (1 Cor 6:9, 10; 15:50; Gal 5:21). Furthermore, possibly the reason for the article before Christ is to denote his title, that is, his proper name, ‘the Christ’ or ‘the Messiah.’ The point is that this kingdom belongs to both Christ and God, which is verified by the possessive genitives. According to 1 Cor 15:24, Christ will hand his kingdom to God the Father and the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of God will become the same kingdom.” [Hoehner, 661f] “It would be inappropriate to conclude that the grammar of this passage makes an equation between Christ and God and thus provides an argument for the deity of Christ. Although the passage unites Christ and God under one article (tou Christou kai theou), it does not necessarily assert identity. Hoehner rightly observes that ‘God’ (theos) occurs frequently without the article, and Paul sometimes speaks of ‘the kingdom of God’ without using the article before ‘God’ (basileiatheoi see 1 Cor 6:9, 10; 15:50; Gal 5:21). Wallace argues that the Granville Sharp rule does not apply to this construction because one of the nouns is a proper name.” [Arnold, 325; see also Best, 482]

THE SECOND COMMAND

Paul’s first command in this portion of Scripture was to not even let certain sins be named amongst us as believers. He now comes to his second command to the Ephesians.

V. 6 — **Let no one deceive you, let no one beguile you** — Μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς ἀπατάτω [mēdeis humas apatatō] — The negative pronoun emphasizes ‘no one, not any person’ is to deceive we who belong to Christ. **“Ever aware of the pressing dangers to the health and purity of his Christian communities, Paul warns against those who attempt to justify ungodly behaviors — such as sexual immorality, filthy talk, and a lifestyle of greed — on the basis of theological reasoning.”** [Arnold, 326]

DECEIVE — This word, here in the verb form ‘to deceive, to mislead,’ was used by Paul in 4:22 as a noun, ‘deceit.’ The word is used two other times in the NT: Paul states Adam was not *deceived* in the garden (1 Tim 2:14) and James states anyone who thinks he is religious but does not control his tongue *deceives* his heart (James 1:26). **“Paul is concerned that influential teachers may surface within the church who will deceive believers by saying that certain behaviors (which Paul deems impure) should really cause no concern. The language Paul uses here is reminiscent of his warnings to the Colossians, where he also warns believers of dangerous teaching that is already threatening the church (see Col 2:8). Earlier in this letter Paul encourages their growth to maturity as believers so they will not be tossed around like waves on the sea by ‘every wind of teaching’ (4:14).”** [Arnold, 326]

‘that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts’ (Eph 4:22 NKJV)

‘And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers ... that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting’ (Eph 4:11,14 NKJV)

‘See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.’ (Col 2:8 ESV)

Note some similar warnings throughout the NT (most of the words in these verses for ‘deceive’ are a form of our word):

‘Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.’ (Rom 16:17,18 NKJV)

‘Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their own craftiness”; and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”’ (1 Cor 3:18-20 NKJV)

‘But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.’ (2 Cor 11:3 NKJV)

‘Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin

is revealed, the son of perdition' (2 Thes 2:3 NKJV)

'Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.' (James 1:13-17 NKJV)

with empty words, with empty arguments, with vain words, with specious arguments — κενοῖς λόγοις [kenois logosis;]

— These words are not 'meaningless' but 'erroneous, empty, without content or without basis, words which contain no truth.'

The word is used 18 times in the NT, 12 times by Paul and only here in Ephesians. Paul used this word in reference to the resurrection where he argues that if Christ is not raised from the dead then both his preaching and the Corinthians' faith was 'void of content, void of truth.' Here they are 'deceptive arguments' which for a time may sound good but do not stand up to thorough examination. These arguments to defend their sin come from unbelievers whose 'minds are without purpose, being darkened in their reasoning processes and that are alienated from the life of God' (4:14,18). Their argument may have been 'everyone has an inheritance, there is no judgement upon those who practice evil, such matters are a matter of indifference, our bodies may sin but our spirits are untouched, or God is a God of grace Who understands our human weaknesses; after all, everyone sins.' **"In Paul's day, there were false Christians who argued that believers could live in sin and get away with it. These deceivers had many arguments to convince ignorant Christians that they could sin repeatedly and still enter God's kingdom. 'You were saved by grace!' they argued. 'Therefore go ahead and sin that God's grace might abound!' Paul answered that foolish argument in Romans 6. 'Sin in the life of a believer is different from sin in the life of an unsaved person.' Yes – it's worse! God judges sin no matter where He finds it, and He does not want to find it in the life of one of His own children. I personally believe that no true Christian can ever be lost, but he will prove the reality of his faith by an obedient life. There are many professors who are not possessors (Matt. 7:21- 23). A Christian is not sinless, but he does sin less – and less – and less! The Christian is a king, and it is beneath his dignity to indulge in the practices of the lost world that is outside the kingdom of God."** [Wiersbe, 45] "Then, as now, sophistries encouraging ethical permissiveness were current; the readers are warned not to be misled by them, for they are 'empty arguments,' having no more substance than the 'empty illusion' of another kind against which the Colossian Christians are put on their guard (Col. 2:8). Those sophistries fail to reckon with God, and ignore the fact that he has set his canon against the practices and attitudes referred to – not by the imposition of an arbitrary ban but by implanting his law within the human constitution, in such a way that those who defy it reap a harvest of retribution." [Bruce, 372; see also Best, 485; Lincoln, 325; Hoehner, 663f; Eadie, 377]

NO SPECIFIC GROUP IDENTIFIED — Paul does not specify any single group to which his comments were directed; they could be anyone from professing believers with antinomianism tendencies to unbelieving Gentiles, although unbelievers may not have had a felt need to defend their debauchery. But there is no question there are those knowingly or unknowingly who will try to deceive the believer:

'that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting' (4:14 NKJV)

'Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' (6:11 NKJV)

Paul had warned the Ephesian elders prior to his departure:

'Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.' (Acts 20:28-31 NKJV)

"Who these people are is a matter of debate. It probably refers to both unbelievers and believers who falsely think that worldly living is of no consequence. Believers can be influenced by their culture so that what is acceptable in the world becomes acceptable in the church. The text has described those in the world as immoral, impure, and greedy. Because it appears that the unbelievers were not presently suffering the consequences of this lifestyle, believers might easily slide into a similar mode of life. Thus, Paul warns against being deceived by the world or by those so-called believers who have bought into the world system. In other words, let no one — whether inside or outside the church — deceive you." [Hoehner, 663; see also Arnold, 326f; Lincoln, 325] "The Apostle generally condemns all apologists for vice, whoever they might be. These would of course be most commonly found among the heathens, and to them the passage most naturally points." [Ellicott, 121]

THE SECOND DESCRIPTION OF THE JUDGEMENT OF GOD

PAUL GIVES SUPPORT FOR HIS ADMONITION – 'BECAUSE OF THESE' REFERS TO THE PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED SINS — **for because of these things the wrath of God** — διὰ ταῦτα γὰρ ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ [dia tauta gar erchetai hē orgē tou theou] — "This is strongly worded. It is the reason one must not be deceived with empty words. Paul expresses this not only by the conjunction 'for,' but also with the prepositional phrase 'on account of these things, because of

these things.’” [Hoehner, 664] *‘Because of these things’ refers not to the ‘empty words’ but rather to the sins mentioned in v. 5. “Paul supports his warning against those who justify sexual immorality, various forms of impurity, and greed by stating that people whose lifestyles are characterized by these practices will face God’s certain and stern judgment.”* [Arnold, 327]

THE WRATH OF GOD — In verse 5 Paul wrote those abiding in those sins are excluded from God’s kingdom; here he clarifies this separation includes the positive action of punishment. *“There is a reaction of holiness against sin, which the Scripture denominates ‘the wrath of God’ (Rom 1:18). Sin is in us, either as act or state; God’s punitive righteousness is over against the sinner, as something to be feared.... The wrath of God is calm and judicial, devoid of all passion or caprice, but it is the expression of eternal and unchangeable righteousness. It is vindicative but not vindictive. Without it there could be no government, and God would not be God.... God has a wrath which is calm, judicial, inevitable — the natural reaction of holiness against unholiness.... The intensity of Christ’s sufferings in the garden and on the cross ... can be explained only upon the view that Christ actually endured the wrath of God against human sin.”* [Strong’s Systematic Theology, 644; 656; 724; 742; definitions: **‘passion’** = any powerful or compelling emotion or feeling; **‘caprice’** = a sudden, unpredictable change; a tendency to change one’s mind without apparent or adequate motive; whimsicality; **‘vindicative’** = tending or serving to vindicate; punitive; retributive; **‘vindictive’** = disposed or inclined to revenge; vengeful] *“This expression is a fearful one, because the wrath of man is the disposition to inflict evil, limited by man’s feebleness; whereas the wrath of God is the determination to punish in a being without limit either as to his presence or power.”* [Hodge, 209] Please note when A. H. Strong says the ‘wrath of God’ is ‘calm and judicial, devoid of passion,’ I do not believe not removing all emotion from wrath. I believe what Strong is attacking is our ‘human wrath’ which is often nothing more than ‘someone flying off the handle.’ God’s wrath is not merely the Lord ‘losing His temper.’ But I do believe there is an emotional aspect of His wrath; e.g., *‘The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity.’* (Psalm 5:5); *‘God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day.’* (Psalm 7:11).



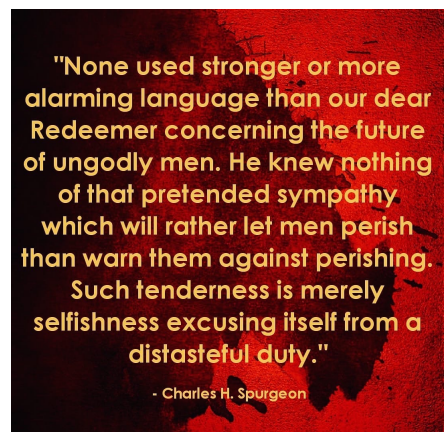
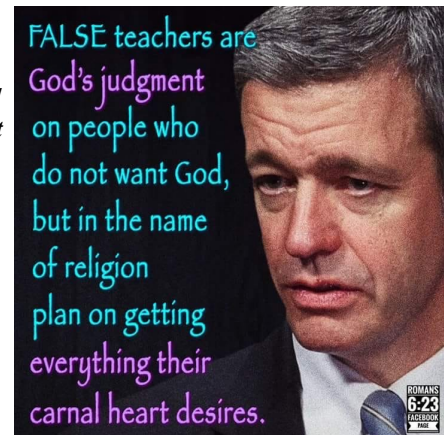
The most tremendous judgment of God in this world is the hardening of the hearts of men.

JOHN OWEN

comes upon the sons of disobedience, comes upon those who are disobedient, is coming upon the sons of disobedience — ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας [epi tous huiou tēs apeitheias] — **‘COMING’ — NOW AND FOREVER!** — The verb is present tense but most commentators allow for both present and future aspects; the verb being what is called a *‘futuristic present’* (Greek grammar: *‘the present tense may be used to describe a future event, though it typically adds the connotations of immediacy and certainty; a description of an event begun in the present but completed in the future’*) God’s wrath is coming, is on its way, till in ‘the day of wrath’ (Rom 2:5) it falls. *“It begins here — the dark cloud pours out a few drops, but does not discharge all its terrible contents.* Such sins especially incur it, and such sinners receive in themselves

‘that recompense of their error which is meet.’ Rom. i. 27. The wrath of God is also poured out on impenitent offenders in the other world. Rev xxi. 8.” [Eadie, 378f] ὀργή [orgē, ‘wrath’] *is not to be limited to the ordinary judgments of this life ... nor is there reason to limit it to the wrath of God in the day of judgment. The wrath of God will be manifested then, but it exists now.”* [Abbott, 152] *“The wrath of God against these sins is now manifested in his dealings with those who commit them. He withdraws from them his Spirit, and finally gives them up to a reprobate mind.”* [Hodge, 209] “[The wrath of God] is both present and future. In Romans Paul states that the present wrath of God is revealed from heaven (Rom 1:18) and that there is a future wrath for those who are hard-hearted and who continue to store up wrath for the day of God’s judgment (2:5). This present and future notion applies also to the kingdom mentioned in the preceding verse. We are presently in the kingdom (Eph 5:5; Col 1:13) and counted as fellow heirs (Eph 2:11-22), sealed with the Holy Spirit (1:13), and yet we will fully possess the kingdom later when we are finally redeemed from the presence of sin (1:14).” [Hoehner, 664; see also Arnold, 327; Best, 485f; Lincoln, 325f; Moule, 130; Bruce, 372; O’Brien, 365]

‘SONS OF DISOBEDIENCE’ — The exact same phrase as 2:2. Notes from lesson 10b: *“‘Sons of disobedience’ are those whom disobedience is their very nature and essential character, who belong wholly to it.* It is a well-known Hebrew idiom, occurring often in the NT, especially in the case of Hebraisms of translation.” [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 284] *“The expression ‘sons of disobedience’ for those in whom that influence is operative is a Hebraism denoting men and women whose lives are characterized by disobedience. The rebellion against God’s will which this term implies includes rejection of the Christian gospel, since [Paul] states that it is occurring in the present. But the disobedience is not to be limited to this and involves general disregard for God’s will.”* [Lincoln, 97] Phrases of this type are regularly found in the NT:



'having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children' (2 Pet 2:14 NKJV). Note YLT: 'having eyes full of adultery, and unable to cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having an heart exercised in covetousnesses, children of a curse'

'For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light' (Eph 5:8 NKJV)

'So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.' (Luke 16:8 NKJV)

'You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.' (1 Thes 5:5 NKJV)

'While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.' (John 17:12 NKJV)

'James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder"' (Mark 3:17 NKJV)

'And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you' (Luke 10:6 NKJV)



"God hates the sin, but loves the sinner. Don't take a lot of comfort in that sinner: because it's not the sin He sends to hell, its the sinner."

Paul is therefore not speaking to believers but to the unredeemed. "As in 2:2, the forceful expression 'sons of disobedience' points not to those who commit the occasional act of disobedience but to men and women whose lives are characterized by disobedience. They do not submit to God's authority; instead, they prefer to rule their own lives and go their own way." [O'Brien, 365] "This idea fits well in the present context because these people do not believe that God judges and consequently they try to persuade all people of this, including believers. That is why Paul warns believers not to believe their words, which are void of content."

[Hoehner, 664] "It is because of these things, that is, because of the sins listed here and the lies of empty words, that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Such people are called sons of disobedience because it is their nature is to disobey and they are 'children of wrath' (2:3; cf. 2 Thess. 1:8-10), the targets for God's guns of judgment. God's attitude toward perverted love and sexual sin is seen clearly in Numbers 25:1-9, where the Israelites had relations with Moabite women and God slaughtered 24,000 of them. His attitude toward sexual sin has not changed, and perverted love attracts God's wrath like a fully-lit city attracts enemy bombers." [MacArthur, 203; see also Arnold, 327; Best, 483f; Lincoln, 325; Bruce, 372]

THE THIRD COMMAND

v. 7 — Therefore do not be partakers with them, do not then become partners with them, do not be fellow sharers with them, do not become fellow participants with them — μή οὐν γίνεσθε συμμέτοχοι αὐτῶν. [mē oun ginesthe summetochoi autōn;] — "In a final warning, Paul says, *Therefore do not be partakers with them. 'Don't join the world in its evil,' he says. 'Don't be partners with them in wickedness. Be partners with Christ in righteousness. Don't imitate the world, but rather be imitators of God, as beloved children' (v. 1).*" [MacArthur, 203] "Paul calls these believers to separate themselves from the lifestyles of those who do not know the Lord and disobey his teaching. Followers of Christ now have a new identity, which they are called to reflect in their daily lives." [Arnold, 327]

DO NOT BECOME — "The γίνεσθε [ginesthe, 'becoming'] is not to be explained away: the Apostle does not warn them only against *being*, but against *becoming* partakers with them, against allowing themselves to lapse into any of their prevailing sins and depravity." [Ellicott, 121; emphasis his] "It should not be translated as 'be' (as AV, RV, ASV, NASB, NRSV), but 'become,' which indicates the possibility of entering into the condition of becoming a fellow participant. Accordingly, in the light of the coming judgment (v. 6), believers should not be deceived into thinking that it is harmless to become participants with unbelievers." [Hoehner, 668]

'TOGETHER-WITH PARTAKERS' — Paul is not prohibiting all contact or 'associating' (such as the RSV translates it) with such people. If that is what Paul intended, they would have to go out of the world altogether (as he argued in 1 Cor 5:9,10)! How can believers function as lights in the world if there is no association with the world? Rather the term used here (literally, 'together-with partners, joint-partakers', the same word as 3:6, the only two times this word is used in the NT) signifies 'one who shares in a possession or a relationship, intimate involvement and participation with the other party.' Those who are 'together-with partners' with the promises of Jesus Christ (3:6) cannot be 'together-with partners' with the 'sons of disobedience' in their lifestyles. The two forms of participation are mutually exclusive. The Ephesian readers have a new community with whom they are to fellowship and associate. "While it is important for Christians to identify with unbelievers as a means of reaching them with the good news of redemption in Christ, we need to be cautious of allowing their impure practices to influence our own behavior. God calls us to be different from the world. This inevitably means that we will sometimes make unbelievers feel uncomfortable because we decline to join them in their practices. Yet God specifically and directly calls us to the higher standard of living our lives in ways that reflect his purity and holiness." [Arnold, 338]

‘WITH THEM’, NOT ‘WITH THEIR SINS’ — Although the words ‘with them’ could be understood to refer to the previously mentioned sins, the antecedent most likely refers to the persons themselves, namely, ‘the sons of disobedience.’ “The context indicates that those with whom the sharing takes place are the disobedient people. Believers are not to accept their views or participate with them in sexual sin, impurity and greed; it can be assumed that those who offer specious arguments which permit these vices indulge in them.” [Best, 486; see also Arnold, 327; Lincoln, 326; Hoehner, 668f; Abbott, 152]

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED? — *As is proper and suitable for those set apart by the Lord to be holy, believers should never be accused of the following sins neither by those inside our Christian circles nor by unbelievers; indeed, these sins should not even be a prominent part of our conversations. None of these sins come up to the standard of appropriate behavior for those belonging to Christ:*

SEXUAL IMMORALITY in the broadest sense possible; including but not limited to extramarital sex, sex with a prostitute even in a religious cultic setting, homosexual sex, incestuous relationships.

ALL AND EVERY KIND OF IMPURITY which encompasses generally riotous and excessive living, including unrestrained sexual behavior.

GREEDINESS, COVETOUSNESS which is the insatiable self-centered desire for more, either sexual or otherwise, and never being satisfied.

SHAMEFUL, DISGRACEFUL AND DEBASED BEHAVIOR, FILTHINESS which could include but not limited to our speech, lewd gestures, inappropriate touching, disgusting kind of practical jokes.

DULL, FOOLISH SPEECH, this being not a reference to one’s intelligence or education but rather one’s morality; including but not limited to dirty talk of a sexual nature and possibly even impious speech.

CRUDE, COURSE JESTING OR SMUTTY TALK; being able to turn a phrase or situation into something dirty, degrading jesting often at somebody else’s expense, suggestive language, double-entendres and innuendos.

Whereas sexual impurity and covetousness expresses self-centered acquisitiveness, in striking contrast the believer is to be known by his thankfulness, acknowledging the Lord as the Giver of all blessings, He Himself being the ultimate desire of our hearts.

For this you know with certainty, that any person whose lifestyle is one of sexual immorality in any and all forms, or any person whose lifestyle is one of riotous and excessive living, of unrestrained sexual behavior, or any person whose lifestyle is one of an insatiable self-centered desire for more, either sexually or otherwise (such a person is an idolater in the eyes of God, worshipping the things created rather than the Creator), such persons have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God, neither now in the spiritual reign of Jesus Christ nor in the eternal kingdom to come.

Let not any person, no not one person deceive or mislead you with empty words, words without basis, words which contain no truth, for because of the previously mentioned sins the wrath of God, God’s calm, judicial, non-whimsical, unchanging, eternal judgment against sin and the sinner, is presently upon and will come in full-measure in eternity upon those whose very nature is that of disobedience and rebellion against the righteous God of Creation.

Therefore do not become ‘together-with partakers’ with them, partners with them, fellow participants with them.