

LIVING A NEW LIFE: RENOUNCING OUR FORMER WAYS

Ephesians 4:17-19

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Sunday AM, August 29, 2010

This morning, we will make three very simple observations. While the observations are simple, the text is packed with a profound and stunning picture of the human race. They are also crammed with heart-melting amazing grace and evangelistic motivation.

Big Idea: When in Rome, do *not* do as the Romans.

My goal is to address three groups of people. The first group is made up of those who have not come to terms with their natural condition (this includes those who are not born again, but it may very well include those who are professing believers). The second group is comprised of believers who have forgotten their first love. This does happen to individual Christians and churches (cf. Revelation 2:4). It's a theme that is close to home for it was the church at Ephesus that received this admonition. The third group is consists of those who are deceived by the lies of academia. People are basically good, with some notable exceptions like Dahmer, Hitler, and Hussein. They understand the nature of humans as nothing more than a blank slate (at best) or a product of chance proceeded by apes (at worst). So what we do is only based on our environment (how we were nurtured) and our highly-developed instinct. The Bible paints a picture that is far deeper than surroundings and DNA. The Bible says there is a polluted source each of us possesses.

1. **Apostolic Authority**, "*Now this I say and testify in the Lord*"

The New Living Translation conveys this idea, "With the Lord's authority I say this." Notice that there is two layers for what he's about to say. The first layer is the apostolic layer, "Now this I say." The second layer is Divine authority, "testify in the Lord." The two pillars of inspiration: God and man. So we do not dare dismiss what he is about to say as unimportant. The practical is apostolic and divine just as doctrine is. So we use words like "orthodoxy" which means right doctrine and "orthopraxy" which means right practice.

2. **An Apostolic Exhortation**, "*That you must no longer walk*"

You must no; longer walk as the Gentiles do. The word "walk" is used seven times in Ephesians (2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). It does not have a literal sense, a stroll. It does have a figurative sense, used for pattern of life. Notice that he says we should "no longer" have this pattern of life. It is the same word found 4:4, "so that we may *no longer* be children." Notice the boldness this requires, he tells them to knock this stuff off. Though this is inferred, clearly the Apostle Paul lives comfortably with categories of good and evil.

3. **An Apostolic Explanation**, "*They are . . .*"

The Gentiles is a reference to unbelievers. The Amplified Bible renders this word "heathen" and the CEV says "godless people." Notice what characterizes "godless people":

- *Futility of mind*. Unbelievers live with moral purposelessness. The unbeliever does not understand himself or the world around him (Wiersbe, *Be Rich*, 108).
- *Darkened understanding*. In our world, the enlightened ones are those who disbelieve the Bible. Talk to someone about creation or marriage from the Bible's perspective and see how "enlightened" you appear. The ability to understand and respond to the gospel is not part of the sinner's make-up apart from God.
- *Alienated from the life of God*. What does the life of God mean? It refers to the life God alone gives (cf. NCV). This is regeneration (Titus 3:5).
- *Ignorance*. The word rendered "ignorance" is where we get our English word "agnostic." 1 Peter 1:14 says, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance." "It refers to the inability to comprehend and see the light" (Rogers and Rogers, *Exegetical Key*, 441).
- *Hardness of heart*. The word translated "hardness" is only used three times in the GNT (Mark 3:5; Romans 11:25; Ephesians 4:18). Romans 2:5 tells us what this hardness of heart leads to.

- *Become callous.* It can also be understood a “dead to feeling” (KJV, “past feeling”). Have you heard of “congenital insensitivity to pain with anhidrosis,” also known as CIPA. It is the “no pain disease.” There are 17 people in the US with this. As children, they cut their lips with their teeth. Some have bitten off part of their tongue. They cannot sense cuts, fractures, or heat. They gnaw on their fingers and poke themselves in the eye without knowing that they are damaging it. The sensation of pain is a gift from God to alert us to danger. “Become callous” is spiritual CIPA, or “no soul pain” disease. Just as physical pain is a gift from God, a sensitivity to sin is a gift from God. So when God cuts off the conviction, this is nothing less than storing up wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed (Romans 2:5). They feel no remorse or feel any conviction for their sin (cf. 1 Timothy 4:2, “whose consciences are seared”). It’s a horrific disease.
- *Totally depraved.* They have given themselves up to depraved practices: sensuality (KJV, “lasciviousness”), greedy to practice every kind of impurity. Notice the emphasis and enticement of sexual sin which characterizes a person without spiritual life (Romans 1:26). Do you think it can’t happen to those who profess Christ? See Matthew 23:27. Notice that this is “every kind of impurity,” literally all impurity. They are “greedy” to indulge in sin. Not moderated but unrestrained.

The Devil’s business is to deceive. He will do whatever it takes to cause you to doubt the word of God. He did this to Eve when he said, “Did God actually say” (Genesis 3:1). This morning, his words echo down the corridor of time and may be ringing in your own minds, “Did actually say?” Jesus said in John 8:44, “When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” So long as the Devil keeps you from embracing this truth, “the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 4:4), he has cleared your path to Hell. As the Scripture says, “For the gate is wide and the way easy that leads to destruction” (Matthew 7:13).

How did all this happen? God created every person for His glory. Isaiah 43:6 and 1 Corinthians 8:6. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, though in a perfect environment, had the freedom to choose to obey God or sin. They chose sin. Consequently, sin and death extended to the entire human race (Romans 5:12). Once sin entered the human race, every person has been touched with its effects, except for one Jesus Christ. Our actual sins include sins of commission (Romans 2:2; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Peter 4:3) and sins of omission (James 4:17). We don’t love or glorify God because of sin. Sin means we have not met the moral standard God demands of each one of us (Romans 3:23). The wages we’ve earned for our sins is death: physical death (cf. the tree of life in Genesis 3:22, 24; Revelation 22:2) and spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1; 4:18; Colossians 2:13; Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8). Because all are sinners, Christ died for all on the cross. However, the death of Christ was not the end. He rose from the dead on the third day to reveal that God accepted His sacrifice and that He is who He claimed to be, the very Son of God! Because of original sin and your actual sin, you are guilty before God. There is nothing you can do to save yourself. Matthew 10:28; John 6:29; Galatians 2:21. We need to be saved and cannot save ourselves. But the good news is that you can be saved through faith in Christ! First, you have to repent of your sins. Acts 17:30; Romans 2:4. Second, you have to believe in Christ. Faith simply means trust. It must be trust in Christ alone for the forgiveness of your transgressions against God and salvation from the penalty of sin. Once this is done, you have been reconciled to God and a child of God. John 1:12; Romans 5:10; You now have a relationship with God as a child of God, no longer an enemy!

Is there anything keeping you from trusting Christ right now? Think carefully. There is nothing more important than your need to trust Christ. Would you like to tell God you are trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior? If you would, why not pray right now and tell God you are trusting His Son? Remember!! It is not a prayer that saves you. It is trusting Jesus Christ that saves you. Prayer is simply how you tell God what you are doing.

Dear God, I know I’m a sinner. I know my sin deserves to be punished. I believe Christ died for me and rose from the grave. I trust Jesus Christ alone as my Savior. Thank You for the forgiveness and everlasting life I now have. In Jesus’ name, amen.