



Ephesians

Part 31

Ephesians 4:17-24
Week of October 10, 2021

Before Connect Group

- Read Ephesians 4:17-24
 - Watch the sermon by going to <http://switzerlandcommunitychurch.org>
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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. But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:17-24

Sermon Notes

One of the foundation truths of the world we live in, is that in the face of the greatest good set out for our lives, there is something waiting to attempt to undo it.

It is such a blessing to be a part of a church like this one. I need you. You need each other. We are to be built up as one body in Christ. These are all the things that we hope for and celebrate when we meet together as believers.

However, there is a threat to the unity of faith, mature manhood, and the stature of the fullness of Christ. There is a threat to “growing up” in every way into him who is the head. There is a threat to the body building itself up in love.

Here at the beginning of this section, you can see a shift in language that indicates an importance in what is to follow. This shift is seen here in this opening phrase that Paul uses. Those of you who are parents can empathize with Paul here in these words. Paul is aware of something that he knows has the ability to undo what it is we are hoping for. It is something that can become a stumbling block for many who are seeking to truly walk on this road of faith. And like children, we are often tempted to dismiss this warning as some sort of overreaction. We think we are stronger than we are, and we assume that this dire warning may apply to others, but not really to us.

The Legitimacy of the Threat:

- *Ephesians 4:17a Now this I say and testify in the Lord.*
- The progression...
- “Therefore” in 4:1- and the foundation of Paul’s imprisonment (his example)
- Urge you is a word of strong calling. Paul uses it in the first verse of our chapter to drive the Ephesians forward in obedience upon the foundation of the gift of grace they have received.
- “Now” in 4:17
- Here in our text, Paul uses different language that shifts from this “urging” to legitimate pastoral concern.
- One of the foundation truths of the world we live in, is that in the face of the greatest good set out for our lives, there is something waiting to attempt to undo it.
- I cannot express the depth of this truth first as a fellow believer in war with my own sin, and then as a pastor praying for and loving a congregation.
- I know that God intends the display of His Glory in and through you. I know that He intends to fill up his children with love and purpose. I know that he has joy set out before you. Yet, somehow the grip of sin, depression, loneliness, and sorrow seem so close and at times so dominant over the lives of so many followers of Christ.
- Paul does not only “say” to them, as if he is instructing them from some unproven philosophy, but he “testifies in the Lord” that they must no longer walk as Gentiles do.
- Paul does not only know this truth inside of him, but he has seen this threat consume too many.
- *1 Timothy 1:18-20 This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

- For those of you who are here this morning and you do not know the true love of Christ, the threat looming over you is the threat of eternity apart from the Father.
- *Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*
- For those of you who believe in Christ and are pursuing the life of God's glory,
- The threat looming over you is a threat of emptiness.
- *Ephesians 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,*

The Nature of the Threat:

- Ephesians 4:17b - "that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do"
- The fact that Paul says "no longer" points to the fact that we once did. Because of this, it is worth a review to talk about the significance of this words movement throughout this text of Ephesians.
- The grace paved path
 - Ephesians 2:1-2
 - Ephesians 2:8-10
- The Call to obedience
 - Ephesians 4:1
 - Ephesians 4:17
- The call to imitate Christ
 - Ephesians 5:1-2 - Walk in love
 - Ephesians 5:8 - Walk in light
 - Ephesians 5:15 - Carefully walk in wisdom
- No longer walk as the Gentiles do.
- What is so interesting about this statement, is that he is writing to Gentiles. Yet, he seems to be identifying them differently.
- This is a point that I think some might accidently drift over while reading this text. This is a point that I have been trying to make over and over and over again in our study of this book, and I will yet make it again.
- You are no longer made up of that which defined you before you came to know Christ. You are a New Creation by the work of Jesus Christ.
- You may be gentiles ethnically, you may be Hispanic, Black, White, Asian, yet Paul would boldly proclaim to you, you must no longer walk as they do.
- This does not necessarily mean we no longer function within our cultural identity but that we set aside anything that may be against God, or specifically hinder you from being built up in the body of Christ as a full child of God.
- Paul is not asking anyone to get circumcised .
- We, who have been transformed in Christ by the grace of God, are able to no longer walk as we once did
- On account of the suffering of Christ.
 - 1 Peter 4:1-6 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in

the spirit the way God does.

- On account of the Coming Judgement.
 - Colossians 3:5-11 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.
- On account of the Spirit who lives in you.
 - *Ephesians 1:13-14* In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.
 - *Romans 8:9-13* You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.
- The core of this threat, is one that intends to keep you from the full joy and assurance that comes from a life of obedience to God.
- The reduction of the Christian life to a set of rules that instruct you of what is right and wrong is harmful to our understanding of what Paul is saying over this next section.
- This is not about employing guilt or shame for the sake of societal conformity.
- This is about your Joy! This is about your Fullness in Christ!
- This is about experiencing the life that is promised in the pages of Scripture.
- The Nature of this threat is to keep you from tasting or realizing the true joy and fulfillment that comes from living a life that is situated at the center of God's will and glory.
- This simply highlights our next and final point from this section:

The Futility of the threat:

- *Ephesians 4:17c* "in the futility of their minds"
- This word that is used here is "futility." Within this word is a sorrow, a loss, an aimlessness of unfulfilled hope. The world boasts of fulfillment, of happiness, but the "futility" that Paul uses here is a shadow cast upon the best things the world has to offer.
- Wisdom: Paul uses this same word when he quotes Psalms 94:11:
- *1 Corinthians 3:20* and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."
- You know that you have been rescued from futility.
- *1 Peter 1:17-19* And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

Which path are you walking today? Are you walking the path of good works (2:10) that have been laid out for you? Are you heeding the urging of Paul to prioritize your calling and lay yourself down at the feet of Christ? Or are you walking the path of your former life? One defined by the passions of your flesh, but leaving you more and more empty? Drawing you to the conclusion that this life has nothing for you?

If so, would you hear the call from the Lord this morning. Come and follow Him. Do not give yourself over to empty promises from this world.

Connect Group Discussion Questions

- What is the nature of the threat that those growing into maturity face? How would you describe this threat and the role it plays in your life?
- What are some of the things that we define ourselves by? Why are these inferior to being defined by the work of Christ?
- The idea of following Christ involves a choice of two different paths. Why is the path of the world appealing? Why is the path of following Jesus better?
- How do we find joy in the fulfillment in Jesus Christ? How does this compare with the promises of the world and the surrounding culture?
- What hope does Christ offer for those who feel trapped in the futility of the threat?

Challenge For The Week

The world will use various means, standards, and judgments in an attempt to define a person and present a threat that we try to ignore. The solution is to willfully engage with and wrestle with the threat, presenting it at the foot of the cross.

- Take some time this week to consider where you might be allowing the threat of sin to run rampant in your life. Where do you need to submit yourself to the Gospel?
- Who do you know who is at risk of the threat of never knowing Jesus Christ in relationship? How can you share the Gospel with them this week?

