



# Ephesians

## Part 32

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

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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

*Our reason and our thinking does not often guide us, but rather, our thinking and our reason more often serves us. The state of our heart dictates our reasoning. Our reasoning does not dictate the passions of our hearts.*

Just a few weeks ago, they held the annual Quad Cities Marathon Illinois on September 26th, 2021. The 26.2 mile race began, and it wasn't long before two Kenyan runners were securing first and second place. As they approached the end of the race, it was clear that they were the fastest. It was clear that no one was going to be able to catch them. It was clear that they had put the work in and they had the lead over the other runners in the race. However, as they neared the end of the race, they followed a race volunteer the wrong direction. Though the path was clearly marked out, they were led down the wrong path. Though they were the fastest, though they were the strongest, they lost the race. You might even say their efforts and running that day were futile.

- As I noted last week, this word futility is an interesting word used here.
- What makes something of value or futile? It is the final goal. The end of the thing.
- This is what accounts for so many people differing on the importance of so many things.
- I may find great value in sitting on my back porch reading a book,
- Why is there great value in this, because I have the intended goal of rest and relaxation. However, my children find no value in sitting on the back porch reading a book because of course, their goal is fun and excitement.
- This is all well and good, but Paul uses this word in reference to an end which is set.
- One that is objective, not one of which is subjective.
- The objective end is to glorify God and stand through the coming judgement.
- To this end, it is a great warning from our apostle, that we must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.
- The futility of mind in vs. 17 contrasted with the renewed spirit of the mind in vs. 23 is what we are most interested in today.

## **Futility Of The Mind vs. Renewing Of The Mind**

- Understanding this difference will help us navigate the context of Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians.
- Previously, we made mention the interesting fact that Paul tells the Gentiles, to whom he is writing, that they should no longer walk as Gentiles.
- Paul clearly does not mean that they should find a way to change their ethnicity. Rather, he is still leaning upon the "Amen" at the end of Chapter 3.
- If all of this is true, then you cannot come to the conclusion that you are the same man at the end of chapter 3 that you were before chapter 1.
  - Do you believe that you have been adopted into the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ? (1:5)
  - Do you believe that when you heard and believed the Gospel, that you were sealed with the Holy Spirit? (1:13)
  - Do you believe that it is by the Grace of God that you have been saved? (2:8)
  - Do you believe that you are a new creation in Christ Jesus (2:10)
  - Do you believe that through Christ you are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel? (3:6)
- It becomes clear that Paul wants us to understand the Christian life different than the way we have understood life before, because in our salvation, our "end" has changed. We

are now concerned about things in heaven, not on things that are perishable.

- *1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*
- So today, let's join Paul in considering the first of these two states. When I come back in two weeks, we will consider the second.

## **Futility of Mind:**

- Darkened in understanding:
  - *Romans 1:18-23 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*
  - The understanding of man, covered by sin, will always darken and detach the Divine truth and glory from the things of this world.
  - "Did not honor Him or give Him thanks"
  - Our reason does not often guide us, rather, our reason most often serves us. The state of our heart will often dictate the end of our reasoning. I will justify that which I am seeking to justify. It is the most intelligent people who struggle within this reality the most.
  - Paul does not communicate here in this text a lack of intelligence on behalf of the Gentiles.
  - *Acts 17:22- 24, 29-31 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,... Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."*
  - Idolatry is simply man's way of perceiving control.
  - *Isaiah 40:18-20 To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains. He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move.*
  - This darkening of understanding has led to "alienation from the life of God"
  - This is a condemnation of death over an individual.
  - In this part of vs. 18, we are reminded of the whole of 2:1-3. That we were dead in our sins and trespasses, walking in them.

- Continuing in a life of sin is the definition of separated from God.
- *Colossians 1:21* And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,
- Become Callous:
  - This is the end result of ongoing darkening of understanding.
  - This word Callous means to lose all feeling.
  - The effect of darkening has become full. The heart is no longer open to any other reasoning. There is no light that can pierce in.
  - Callous is a unique word in the Bible. It is only used here in this text. The closest relation we have is over in Timothy:
    - *1 Timothy 4:1-3* Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.
  - In both instances there is a finality to the language. A tipping point. There is a real line that once crossed, there seems to be no way back.
  - This is not to communicate that God cannot save anyone at any point.
  - Rather, it seems in our text to communicate this is the necessary end in order for one to justify a life of sin as "good".
  - "Greedy" is a word that communicates an endless passion.

## **Futility In Its End**

- Futility of Mind by Paul's definition is the end result of the best that the World has to offer.
- Promises, Hopes, dreams; They are all futile.
- The thing that gets us every time, is that often, they seem to be the fastest ones in the race. They seem very prepared. They can even seem very moral. They may elevate humanitarian aid
- But in the end, the world can offer nothing when we stand before the father.
- You need understanding that is not your own.
- *Ephesians 1:15-18* For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened.

You are running a marathon. Are you running in futility? Or are you running to the true finish line?

# Connect Group Discussion Questions

- What does futility look like in our spiritual lives? What are the distinctions of a futile spiritual life? How are we tempted to continue in futility in our faith?
- How does a heart harden and become calloused? What are some of the things that cause us to grow harden and darkened?
- Why do we consistently fall into the trap of the temptation of the world? What do the promises of the world offer? How do they compare with the richness and glory of the Lord and eternity?
- How does the Gospel provide hope for those trapped in sin or those who have grown callous to their sin? In what ways does the Gospel provide restoration to those who have grown callous?
- When did you first come to know Jesus Christ and start your marathon? What happened and how did Christ rescue you from futility?

## Challenge For The Week

Everyone is running a race in spirituality. Some of us, though, run the race in futility by running the wrong direction. Everyone should run towards Christ, refusing to give in to temptation, sin, and darkness lest we become callous.

- Take some time this week to honestly consider where you have grown callous or complacent in your sin. Perhaps you fought it at first but now you simply allow it to continue to grow.
- God gives us opportunities to share our faith and help those running in futility. Rather than be the guide pointing the wrong way, by sharing our story, we can point others towards Jesus Christ. Pray for those people in your immediate circle of influence who needs to know and begin a relationship with Jesus Christ.

