

OCTOBER 20, 2019

WALKING DIFFERENTLY

Ephesians 4:17-32

INTRODUCTION

The church has been called by one scholar, a contrast society. Distinctions matter. Those born again, changed, and transformed by the sovereign, reigning Lord, have been spiritually uprooted from this earth and empowered with the ethic of heaven. Christians, then, are to live according to the Kingdom of God, ethically contrasting the values, norms and passions of this earthly kingdom. Paul has already laid out the theology of our unity – our unity with Christ and with one another (Ephesians 1-3). Now he is teaching what this unity is to be in life and society. As we study this section of the letter, we should do so asking to answer the question of how we, the church, must live in contrast to this world?

THE OLD (Ephesians 4:17-19)

Paul begins with the warning: *I say this and testify in the Lord* (Ephesians 4:17). Living distinct from the world is not a small matter. Paul invokes the Lord to heighten the need to heed the instruction that follows. Ephesus was a particularly immoral place and the Gentile believers who came out of that society were more inclined to be enticed and influenced to return to it. Paul says that they should *no longer live as the Gentiles live* (Ephesians 4:17) in the *futility of their thoughts* (Ephesians 4:18) and *darkened in their understanding* (Ephesians 4:18). This is what used to characterize the morality of the Gentile believers and signified the time when they were *excluded from the life of God because of ignorance* and the *hardness of their hearts* (Ephesians 4:18). Paul is teaching us that immorality begins – in the mind and the heart which informs how we live. To be redeemed and born again is to have our minds impacted by truth. Instead of being captivated and captured by immorality by *giving themselves over to promiscuity* (Ephesians 4:19) they should be a contrast society - captivated and compelled by the Lord and holiness living contrary to immorality of the culture.

THE CHANGE (Ephesians 4:20-24)

Paul calls the Ephesians to leave the old way of life precisely because they learned in the school of Christ how to live and behave as people quickened by the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:20; Ephesians 2:4-5). Contrary to the ignorance, darkness and futility that once characterized them (Ephesians 4:18), they have been taught truth and should reflect this in their lives. In reality they know better! Paul continues by saying *assuming you heard about Him and were taught by Him* (Ephesians 4:21). The church at Ephesus was like many churches today filled with a mixture of people: those who profess and practice the faith and those who merely profess. The evidence of salvation is not mere profession but the practice of taking *off the former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by evil desires* (Ephesians 4:22). Daily, in other words, believers should consciously be changing their moral clothing. Though we are saved by grace alone apart from any works (Ephesians 2:8-10) grace is not alone. Saving grace is evidenced by continual growth illustrated by the removal (taking off) of every evidence of the old way of life: in act and or affection. All of this takes place when we are *renewed in the spirit of your minds* (Ephesians 4:23). When our minds are governed by truth not only will we take off the old, but we will be empowered to *put on the new - self* (Ephesians 4:24). Believers should never be satisfied with being unlike the world by removing or stopping a certain sin. We should not simply labor to be unlike the world but to be like Christ, actively and consciously putting on the new man created in *Christ's righteousness and purity of the truth* (Ephesians 4:24).

THE NEW (Ephesians 4:25-32)

Christians are not lifted out of society but transformed in order to transform. Paul teaches that putting on Christ involves discipline in specific virtues. First, we must *put away lying* and *speak the truth* (Ephesians 5:25). Christians must be known by the contrast of commitment to always being truthful and never deceptive. Next, we must learn the distinction of possessing righteous indignation against sin without being sinful in our emotional response or reactions. We do this by keeping short accounts by addressing issues of anger quickly and, secondly, to keep in mind the enemy's design to use anger as a weapon to disrupt unity (Ephesians 4:26, 27). Believer must also be diligently industrious, providing for themselves, as opposed to operating in deceit and thievery. Christians should work so that they might be able to demonstrate the grace of giving and sharing, not being lazy or dependent on deceitful means of gain (Ephesians 2:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11). Another contrast involves the intention of our speech. Believers should never speak to destroy or to condemn, but with the grace of God to build up and edify (Ephesians 4:29-30). Corrupt speech not only harms others but grieves the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). A final contrast is with respect to attitudes. Christians should live under the truth that, in light of the forgiveness experienced in Christ in spite of our sin, we ought to be characterized by our willingly forgiving sins against us. This must be our internal disposition towards others (Ephesians 4:32) rather than that of *bitterness, anger* or *wrath* (Ephesians 4:31).