

Ephesians

Chapter 4:17-24

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THE FUTILITY OF THE NATURAL MAN

17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,

18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart;

- Paul instructs the Ephesians that there should be a marked difference between them and the unsaved. Specifically, they are to think differently than the rest of the world thinks. He testifies in the Lord that the minds of the unsaved are founded in futility. Paul is saying that all of their thoughts, assumptions and beliefs are futile given their positions before God. He provides a progression which explains where this condition of futility comes from:
 - futile minds
 - darkened understanding
 - alienated from God because of ignorance
 - ignorant because of the blindness of their heart
- This understanding that Paul provides should be normative for shaping our evangelism. Many times we foolishly think that we can persuade the unsaved through rational arguments. This proves fruitless because we are dealing with spiritually insane people. Frequently non-Christians will demand rational arguments from us but we must be equipped with the understanding that these arguments will not save. Their hardness of heart is the cause of the hardness of head. They do not have an *intellectual* "problem" with Christianity, they have a *sin* problem before God. John 3:19-20.
- The recent historical progression of philosophy:

Aristotle to the Middle Ages:	scho-las-ti-cism (sk...l²s"t¹-s¹z"...m) <i>n.</i> 1. Often Scholasticism . The dominant western Christian theological and philosophical school of the Middle Ages, based on the authority of the Latin Fathers and of Aristotle and his commentators. 2. Close adherence to the methods, traditions, and teachings of a sect or school. 3. Scholarly conservatism or pedantry.
17th & 18th Centuries:	em-pir-i-cism (µm-pîr¹-s¹z"...m) <i>n.</i> 1. The view that experience, especially of the senses, is the only source of knowledge. 2.a. Employment of empirical methods, as in science. b. An empirical conclusion. 3. The practice of medicine that disregards scientific theory and relies solely on practical experience. -- em-pir "i-cist <i>n.</i>
19th Century:	rel-a-tiv-ism (rµl"...t¹-v¹z"...m) <i>n.</i> <i>Philosophy.</i> A theory that conceptions of truth and moral values are not absolute but are relative to the persons or groups holding them.
20th Century:	sub-jec-tiv-ism (s...b-jµk"t...-v¹z"...m) <i>n.</i> 1. The quality of being subjective. 2.a. The doctrine that all knowledge is restricted to the conscious self and its sensory states. b. A theory or doctrine that emphasizes the subjective elements in experience. 3. The theory that individual conscience is the only valid standard of moral judgment. -- sub-jec "tiv-ist <i>n.</i> -- sub-jec "tiv-is"tic <i>adj.</i>

- The futility of non-Christian logic begins with the assumption of independence from God. This primary belief is what feeds the futility of non-Christian thought. When natural man assumes that all truth is available for him to discover and that he is responsible for all aspects of his destiny then all of his philosophies are built upon falsehood.

Colossians 2:8-10

- The myth of neutrality. Many non-Christians believe that they are able to "study the facts objectively" or not be swayed by religious questions thereby remaining neutral when developing philosophy or pursuing truth. Christians also frequently make the mistake of attempting to find neutral ground upon which to build their case for Christianity when evangelizing the unsaved. Both of these premises are untrue in that there is no neutral ground. You are either in rebellion

from Christ or in submission to Him.

19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

- **This intellectual futility will always be manifest in evil behavior. Even those behaviors which have an appearance of good when done in rebellion to Christ are deemed "filthy rags". Isaiah 64:6**

THE DEATH OF THE OLD MAN

In this section Paul reminds the Christians at Ephesus of how they were saved and exhorts others to be saved in a similar way.

20 But you have not so learned Christ,

21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

- **Paul contrasts the futility of thought and the behaviors of the unsaved with that of the true believer. He reminds them that those who are true believers have put off the old man. We have previously covered this topic in detail but a short review will be helpful:**
- **When we were born, we were fallen by association with the human race. We are all included in the first Adam, the head of the human race. Romans 5:12-13**
- **As we grew older and our sinful nature (old man) matured, we sinned and our sins were imputed to us. When we sinned, we did so naturally.**
- **We continued in our sin and were separated from God and were unable to do anything about it. We were enslaved to our sinful natures and our flesh and we could not know the righteousness of God.**

Romans 6:17

- **When God's grace was revealed in us our sinful nature (which was in bondage to sin) was crucified. We were made alive in Christ and given a new nature and told to harness the desires of our physical flesh.**

Romans 6:11-13

- **When God's grace brings forth regeneration, not only does He create a new heart but as a result the man's mind is made new and he now has the capacity to glorify God in his thoughts. Paul instructs the Ephesians that these things are indicative of true believers.**