

No Longer Walk Like the Old Man – *Ephesians 4:17-19*

Introduction – What you believe determines how you live. Who you are determines what you do. What you used to believe and what you used to be (as unbelievers, Gentiles, outside of the covenant) is still all around you in an unbelieving world. But we are saints, called out ones. We are not to walk like that anymore. Even better – we don't have to walk like that anymore. And even more so in Christ - we don't want to walk like that anymore.

Overview – The idea of "walking" is going to be used over and over throughout the rest of Ephesians. Walking, in this context, has to do with how we go about our daily lives, the patterns of behavior, our habits and pursuits, and is to be considered as an overflow of what we believe to be true. We believe something new about ourselves and all of creation now that we understand all that God has done through Jesus Christ (Eph 1-3). That being the case, Paul solemnly declares that Christians ought not to walk according to our old mindset/belief-structure/rebellion (v17). The futility of that nature is revealed: their heads are dark because their hearts are blind (v18). That darkened, moral stupidity eventually works itself out in darkened, foolish and immoral behavior (v19).

Why Does Paul Need to Say This? – The Christian life is not merely a philosophical view; it is a life to be lived, and to be lived in particular details (John 13:17). What is proclaimed on Sunday is to be manifest Monday-Saturday; there is a constant linking of doctrine to practice – they must never be divided. And so, first, like the Ephesian saints, we need to hear this because we are tempted in the same way, with an unbelieving culture around us. In fact, we must be solemnly exhorted as well to avoid this path. Second, Paul wouldn't command something that the Lord was not giving so that we can obey. And third, all of these commands are based on the doctrine of victory declared in Chapters 1-3.

The Belief of Unbelief – Because it lacks the right relationship to God, thinking that begins from unbelief suffers from a fatal flaw. It loses its grasp on reality and falls prey to folly (Rom 1:20-25).

Darkened Minds (v18a)– This is spiritual ignorance and the consequence is separation from the life of God (without the fear of the Lord, there is no lasting knowledge or wisdom – Prov 1:7).

Hardened Hearts (v18b) – The "*blindness of their heart*" can also be translated, "*the stubbornness of their heart*" and both are true. Repeatedly refusing to believe and submit, to acknowledge or thank God, this stubbornness creates a thick wall that blinds any affection or obedience to God as God.

Calloused and Insatiable Senses (v19) – "*being past feeling*," that is, our senses become deadened which leads to a need for excesses and unbridled abuses of satisfying the senses in order to feel anything. It only becomes weirder and weirder.

The Walk of Unbelief – The picture of the unbelieving life is painted by Paul in the blackest colors (as he does in Rom 1:26-32). He is not interested here to provide a balanced analysis, pointing out the positive features or accomplishments of pagans (and there have been many). Instead, he would provide decisive reasons why Christians must remain distinctively Christian in their faith and practice, because the two cannot be divided for long – not culturally, not individually. Think of it this way: we are always moving; we are always living in a trajectory. Here is where such unbelief must eventually go.

Given Over to Lewdness – The term encompasses generally riotous and excessive living, but frequently had unrestrained sexual behavior in view which comes from failure to acknowledge the Creator.

All Kinds of Uncleaness – Sexual immorality may well be primarily in view, but again the reference is not limited to this, for he says, "*all kinds of impurity*." What you give your tongue to, what you give your eyes to, how you respect God-ordained roles and responsibilities, all require holiness before the Lord.

Together with Greediness – Translated also as "covetousness" (Eph 5:3, Col 3:5) this is the insatiable, greedy desire, never satisfied, making one oblivious to the needs of others or of the consequences upon others. Chrysostom called this the greatest cause of evils and the greatest evil.

Don't Walk to the Temple of Artemis – Jesus said you cannot serve two masters. Paul said you cannot commune at two tables. You cannot believe in the gospel and then live as though it were not true. "But look," you say, "I do it all the time." Yes, but you cannot sustain the dissonance for long.

Our Culture – One hundred plus years ago we began to publicly deny the deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ and His Word as the standard of law and society. We have instructed generations of children that God has absolutely nothing to do with truth, our destinies, or how a society functions. We thought we could remain a moral culture in the midst of it. The explicit sexual deviancies, hatred of children, abuse of women, and open enrollment for others to join in on the licentious fun are the trajectory. It is where such belief must go. And therefore, we must not preach a return to conservative, traditional values. We must preach repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Individually – You are and will be tempted to follow the old paths and think they can be disconnected from your belief in God, the new King, and His new creation. You are solemnly charged here not to walk there. And, as you put this off, there is something new to be put on (vv20ff). A new walk should replace our old walk.