

THE OLD LIFE MUST GO, PT. 1; EPH. 4:17-19 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

WE ARE CURRENTLY MAKING OUR WAY THROUGH THE SECOND OVERARCHING THEME of Ephesians, ~ 4:2 — 6:9.

▶▶ Recall, ~ In Eph. 4:1, ~ Paul told us, ~ "As a result of all that God has done for and given you, ~ i.e., ~ our great salvation and its accompanying blessings spelled out in the first three chapters of this letter, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ I, ~ a prisoner of the Lord, ~ urge you to apply or display this truth by living in a way that brings honor and glory to Him."

▶▶ And then from 4:2 — 6:9, ~ Paul spells out in detail the type of life that brings honor and glory to God, ~ the type of life that should result from the truth of chapters 1-3.

THIS MORNING, ~ WE BEGIN THE NEXT SECTION OF THIS SECOND OVERARCHING theme, ~ 4:17-24, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ in which we learn more about the type of life that brings honor and glory to God, ~ the type of life that should result from being saved by Jesus and given "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

▶▶ Here's the main idea of this paragraph: ~ As a result of what God has done for and given us, ~ believers are to no longer be governed by our sinful nature. ~ I.e., ~ we are to no longer practice a sinful lifestyle as unbelievers do.

▶▶ Let's briefly set the context of this paragraph.

▷▷ In verse 17a, ~ Paul transitions into this next paragraph.

▷▷ In verse 17b, ~ he presents us with his main idea of the paragraph.

↪↪ Paul exhorts believers to "no longer live as unbelievers do." ~ I.e., ~ our sin nature must no longer be our guide in life.

→→ Paul insists that, ~ as a result of what God has done for and given us, ~ we reject the old sinful life we had before we were saved. ~ Simply, ~ old life must go.

▷▷ And then in verses 17c-24, ~ he builds on his exhortation or main idea.

▶▶ Today, ~ we will look at verses 17-19. ¶¶ 1/9

PAUL BEGINS THE PARAGRAPH, ~ VERSE 17a, ~ WITH, ~ "NOW THIS I SAY AND testify in the Lord."

THE WORD TRANSLATED "TESTIFY" HERE MEANS "TO URGE SOMETHING AS A MATTER of great importance."

▶▶ The sentence could be translated as, ~ "Now this I say and insist on in the Lord."

▶▶ We can make two observations here.

▷▷ 1st, ~ we observe that Paul is not just suggesting, ~ or advising, ~ or saying "if you feel like it."

↳↳ He is insisting strongly, ~ i.e., ~ he is firmly demanding, ~ that believers reject the old sinful life we had before we were saved and received "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

▷▷ And 2nd, ~ we observe that this is a matter of great importance. ~ it is very important that believers do what Paul is insisting that we do. ~ It is not to be taken lightly. ~ The old life must go.

IN VERSE 17b, ~ WE HAVE PAUL'S MAIN IDEA OF THE PARAGRAPH.

PAUL EXHORTS BELIEVERS TO "NO LONGER WALK ~ [I.E., ~ LIVE] ~ AS THE GENTILES ~ [i.e., ~ unbelievers] ~ do."

▶▶ As a result all that God has done for and given us, ~ spelled out in the first three chapters of the letter, ~ Paul says, ~ we are to no longer live like unbelievers.

▷▷ Understand, ~ Paul not saying

↳↳ Specifically talking about the sinful lifestyle of unbelievers. ~ The sinful lifestyle we believers practiced before we were saved.

▷▷ I.e., ~ As a result of what God has done for and given us, ~ believers are to no longer be governed by our sinful nature. ~ I.e., ~ we are to no longer practice a sinful lifestyle as unbelievers do.

▶▶ God has not chosen believers for salvation in order for us to remain as we were. ~ God has not saved us in order for us to continue living a sinful lifestyle, ~ Paul says.

▷▷ Because Jesus has saved us and given us "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places," ~ the old life must go. ↴↴ 2/9

USING VERY STRONG WORDING, ~ PAUL, ~ IN COL. 3:3-5, ~ DRIVES THE SAME POINT home.

▶▶ "For you have died, ~ and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ~~ When Christ ~ who is your life ~ appears, ~ then you also will appear with him in glory.

▷▷ Put to death ~ therefore ~ [i.e., ~ because you have died, ~ and your life is hidden with Christ in God, ~ put to death, ~ very strong words ~ put to death] ~ what is earthly in you:

↪↪ [examples] ~ sexual immorality, ~ impurity, ~ passion, ~ evil desire, ~ and covetousness, ~ which is idolatry."

▶▶ There is to be a clean break with the past, ~ Paul says. ~~ We are to take ~ decisive action ~ against the sins of the past.

▷▷ The phrase ~ "Put to death" ~ shows there is to be no compromise on our part. ~~ The past unsaved life has no place in our new life that we have in and from Jesus.

IN 1 PET. 4:3a, ~ PETER REINFORCES WHAT PAUL SAYS.

▶▶ He writes, ~ "For the time that is past ~ [referring to our lives before we came to Christ] ~ suffices for doing what the Gentiles ~ [unbelievers] ~ want to do."

▶▶ Basically, ~ Peter is saying, ~ "Enough already. ~~ Put sin in your rearview mirror." ~~ You have had enough in your past life of the evil things that non-Christians desire."

▶▶ Peter is driving the point home that the past is the past. ~~ It is over and done with.

▷▷ There must be no going back to the sinful things we were involved in before we came to Christ.

BOTH PETER AND PAUL MAKE THE POINT CLEARLY.

▶▶ Now that we have eternal life ~ and have been given "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places," ~ ¶¶

▷▷ there must be a complete break ~ with the sinful things that we were involved in ~ in our unsaved life. ~~ The old life must go.

NOW, ~ IN VERSE 17c, ~ PAUL BEGINS TO BUILD ON HIS EXHORTATION OR MAIN idea.

WE'LL COVER VERSES 17c-19 TODAY. ¶¶ 3/9

IN VERSES 17c-19, ~ PAUL GIVES A DESCRIPTION OF UNBELIEVERS.

NOW, ~ WE NEED TO ASK, ~ "WHY THIS DESCRIPTION?" ~ OR ~ WHAT PURPOSE DOES it serve?

▶▶Of course context is key. ~~ This description immediately follows Paul's statement of his main idea that believers are to no longer live as unbelievers do. ~~ So it's connected to that.

▷▷I would suggest that the description serves the purpose of providing a rationale or a reason why we should no longer live as unbelievers do.

IN THIS DESCRIPTION, ~ PAUL POINTS OUT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BELIEVERS and unbelievers.

▶▶At one time, ~ believers were unbelievers. ~~ We belonged to that unsaved life. ~~ But we no longer belong to that category. ~~ *We no longer fit this description that Paul's about to give.*

▶▶The description highlights the fact that our old life has no place in the new life we have in and from Jesus.

▶▶Therefore, ~ we are no longer to live the way unbelievers do.

MY FELLOW BELIEVERS, ~ WE ARE NEW CREATIONS IN CHRIST.

▶▶As Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:17, ~ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

▶▶We are new creations. ~~ And our lifestyle must match our new status.

▶▶And to vividly point that out, ~ Paul uses a series of hard hitting comments that describe unbelievers, ~ *↓↓*

▷▷in order to emphasize that that old sinful way of life doesn't meet the criteria for the new life.

▶▶His description emphatically serves the purpose of providing a rationale or reason why believers should no longer live as unbelievers do.

▷▷A rationale or reason why the old life must go.

LET'S NOW CONSIDER PAUL'S DESCRIPTION OF UNBELIEVERS.

THE FIRST PART OF HIS DESCRIPTION IS IN VERSES 17c-18a *↓↓ 4/9*

▶▶[Context, 17a] ~ ^{17a} "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, ^{17b} that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, ~ [1st part of description] ~ ^{17c} in the futility of their minds. ^{18a} They are darkened in their understanding."

▶▶These two phrases, ~ "in the futility of their minds" and "They are darkened in their understanding" ~ are similar in meaning and should not be interpreted separately.

▷▷They combine to emphasize the inability of unbelievers to comprehend spiritual truth.

PAUL BRINGS THIS OUT IN 1 COR. 2:14, ~ THAT UN. CANNOT COMPREHEND

▶▶"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God ~ [i.e., ~ the unsaved person does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God], ~ ¶¶

▷▷for they are folly to him, ~ and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned [i.e., ~ only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means]."

▶▶Unbelievers have no life but physical life. ~~ They do not have spiritual life. ~~ They are dead spiritually.

▶▶Remember back in Eph. 2:1, ~ Paul said that before we were saved we were dead in our trespasses and sins.

▶▶The Holy Spirit does not dwell within unbelievers giving them understanding of spiritual realities.

▶▶Those who have only physical life cannot understand spiritual realities, ~ such as sin, ~ hell, ~ heaven, ~ resurrection, ~ God's word, ~ that salvation and eternal life come only through Jesus.

▷▷Plus, ~ their moral reasoning is faulty.

▶▶Spiritual realities all sound foolish to them.

▶▶This explains the reaction Paul got in Athens when "he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection." ~~ Acts 17:18b, ~ "And some said, 'What does this babler wish to say?'"

▶▶Spiritual realities sound foolish to unbelievers because only those who have the Holy Spirit within them can understand them. ~~ Unbelievers are incapable of grasping them.

IN VERSE 18b, ~ PAUL CONTINUES WITH HIS DESCRIPTION OF UNBELIEVERS.

THEY ARE "ALIENATED FROM THE LIFE OF GOD," ~ PAUL SAYS. ~~ I.E., ~ SEPARATED . . .

▶▶ Tragically, ~ and this should make us weep my brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ tragically, ~ unbelievers do not have salvation from sin and eternal life that only Jesus can give.

▷▷ Acts 4:12, ~ "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

▶▶ Recall that we discussed this back in Eph. 2:12, ~ where Paul calls on us to remember that, ~ before Jesus saved us, ~ **we were** "separated from Christ . . . having no hope and without God in the world."

▷▷ When a person is "separated from Christ" ~ it means that they are 100% sinful, ~ sinning is a way of life for them, ~ they are following the standards of this world and Satan, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ they are enslaved to their sinful nature and its sinful desires ~ and are carrying those sinful desires out daily, ~ ¶¶

→→ and most tragically of all, ~ they are subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and destined for ~ God's wrath.

▷▷ When a person is "separated from Christ" they have no hope.

↳↳ I.e., ~ unbelievers have no promise of a glorious future ~ and therefore no confident expectation of a glorious future.

↳↳ Heartbreakingly, ~ for the unsaved, ~ life leads to despair, ~ discouragement, ~ depression, ~ uncertainty for the future, ~ a fear of death, ~ and death itself.

▷▷ When a person is "separated from Christ", ~ they are "without God in the world."

↳↳ I.e., ~ unbelievers are living in this world without a relationship with the one true God.

↳↳ Think through some of the things that means. ~ they do not have Him guiding them, ~ blessing them, ~ or helping them. ~ They do not have His friendship. ~ ¶¶

→→ They do not have Him to turn to in times of trouble. ~ They do not have His word steering them through this sin-darkened world.

→→ How tragic for those who still do not have a relationship with the one true God. ¶¶ 6/9

IN VERSE 18c, ~ PAUL GIVES THE REASON UNBELIEVERS ARE UNABLE TO comprehend spiritual realities and why they are separated from the life that God gives.

HE SAYS IT IS "BECAUSE OF THE IGNORANCE THAT IS IN THEM."

▶▶ At first glance, ~ this might seem to alleviate their guilt and accountability to God for their sin and sinfulness, ~ simply because they do not know any better.

▶▶ But this is not some innocent lack of knowledge. ~ I'll explain.

IN VERSE 18d, ~ PAUL GIVES THE REASON FOR THEIR "IGNORANCE."

HE SAYS THEIR "IGNORANCE" IS "DUE TO THEIR hardness of heart," ~ i.e., ~ toward God.

▶▶ Paul clarifies in [Romans 1:18-32](#) that God has left himself a sufficient witness in the world so that people are not entirely ignorant of his existence.

▷▷ Rom. 1:20a, ~ "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."

▶▶ In fact, ~ Paul asserts that unbelievers know God.

▷▷ But they have chosen not to honor him as God or acknowledge his kindness to them, ~ and thus they reject the witness he has given to them.

▷▷ Rom 1:21-23, ~ "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."

▷▷ Rom. 1:25b, ~ Paul says that unbelievers "exchanged ~ [to exchange one thing for another] ~ the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator."

▶▶ IOW, ~ this is not some innocent lack of knowledge.

▶▶ In point of fact, ~ the word Paul uses for "ignorance," in [verse 18c](#), ~ carries the implication that the ignorance is willful, ~ an ignoring and rejection of the truth.

▷▷ I.e., ~ they're unable to comprehend spiritual realities and are separated from the life that God gives because they ignore and reject the truth. **⇓ 7/9**

▶▶ And they ignore and reject the truth because they have rejected the witness God has given to humanity.

▷▷ "because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator."

▶▶ So, ~ unbelievers are accountable and guilty before God. ~~ They cannot claim some innocent ignorance.

▷▷ As Paul says in [Rom. 1:20b](#), ~ "So they are without excuse."

PAUL FINISHES HIS DESCRIPTION OF UNBELIEVERS IN VERSE 19.

"THEY HAVE BECOME CALLOUS AND HAVE GIVEN THEMSELVES UP TO SENSUALITY, greedy to practice every kind of impurity," ~ Paul says.

▶▶ If I understand this correctly, ~ the form of the verb Paul uses suggests that they have reached this point, ~ presumably after a period of rejecting God and his ways.

▶▶ This is good to understand. ~~ Because someone might look at this and think, ~ "Oh, ~ I'm not this bad."

▷▷ So this does not happen right away. ~~ It's a result that eventually occurs from continuously rejecting God and His ways over a period of time.

▶▶ The point here seems to be that if a person continues to refuse to repent and turn to Christ, ~ eventually they won't care anymore about right and wrong.

▷▷ Eventually, ~ they will have no feeling of shame. ~~ They will use their lives for doing all kinds of evil. ~~ And they will continually want to do all kinds of immoral things.

▶▶ Paul gives a fuller picture of the process in [Rom. 1:18-32](#)

WHAT A HORRIBLE PICTURE.

WHAT A HORRIBLE DESCRIPTION ~~ WHAT A HORRIBLE CONDITION

▶▶ Clearly see that it does not fit us.

▶▶ Now, ~ we've looked closely at this description, ~ but let's not lose sight of the

CONCLUSION.

IN CLOSING, ~ LET'S REFOCUS ON THE PURPOSE OF THIS DESCRIPTION OF unbelievers.

▶▶ As we noted at the beginning, ~ Paul's description serves the purpose of providing a rationale or a reason why believers . . . should no longer live as unbelievers do.

▶▶ I think we can clearly see that we no longer fit this description. ~~ None of it describes those who truly belong to Jesus.

▶▶ And I think that when we really think about it, ~ the description indeed highlights the fact that our old sinful life has no place in the new life we have in and from Jesus.

▶▶ Indeed, ~ we are new creations . . . ~~ indwelt . . . ~~ every spiritual blessing . . . ~~ rescued . . . ~~ future

▶▶ We are new creations in Christ ~ and therefore we must no longer live as unbelievers do.

▶▶ Jesus has given us wings to soar like eagles.

▷▷ Why in the world would we settle for living in a chicken coop?

↪↪ The old life must go.

LET'S PRAY 9/9