

EPHESIANS: GOD'S GLORY IN THE CHURCH (study 8a)

Newness (pt. 1)

New Man, New Clothes, New Life

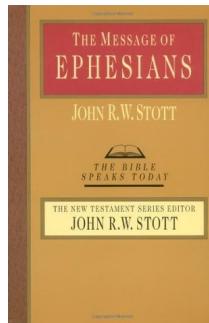
*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature **children of wrath**, even as the rest.*

-- EPH. 2:1-3 (NAS)

Study 8a: WHY are they CHILDREN of WRATH? (4:17-19)

4:17-18 Why can the Gentiles NEVER attain the knowledge of the Son of God? (cf. vv. 13,15; Rom. 1:18-23)

What is immediately noteworthy is the apostle's emphasis on the intellectual factor in everybody's way of life. While describing pagans, he draws attention to the *futility of their minds*, adds that they are *darkened in their understanding* and attributes their alienation from God to the *ignorance that is in them*. He thus refers to their empty minds, darkened understanding and inward ignorance, as a result of which they had become callous, licentious and insatiably unclean. But in contrast to them the believers had "learned" Christ, "heard" him, been "taught" in him, all according to the "truth" which is in Jesus. Over against the darkness and ignorance of the heathen Paul thus sets the truth of Christ which the Christians had learned. Scripture bears an unwavering testimony to the power of truth to liberate, enoble and refine. [Stott 175]



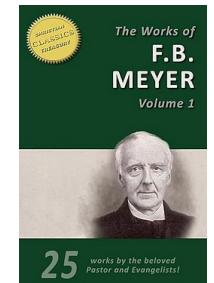
4:19 Are the insatiable appetites of the Gentiles to be viewed as addictions (i.e. illness)? (cf. Rom. 1:24-32)

Thus hardness of heart leads first to darkness of mind, then to deadness of soul under the judgment of God, and finally to recklessness of life. Having lost all sensitivity, people lose all self-control. It is exactly the sequence which Paul elaborates in ... Romans 1. [Stott 177]

"Separated ... alienated ... having no hope and without God in the world"

Frivolity offends God as much as gross sin

Those who live a worldly life are as much under the influence of the devil, and as much children of wrath, as those who give way to the lusts of the flesh. This is a very solemn thought. We make distinctions which are not recognized by God. We classify sinners after a fashion which will not stand the test of eternity. We pity the child of fashion, whose one thought is dress, rank, and amusement; flitting like a butterfly from flower to flower, and squandering the priceless hours in vanity and gaiety. But in the sight of God, such a one stands in the same category, is the prey of the same evil spirit, and is menaced by the same doom as the libertine or the sot. It may even be that a frivolous worldly life is more offensive to God than that which is swept by violent storms of passion. [F.B. Meyer *Ephesians Key Words of the Inner Life*, p. 102]



Study 8b: BEST-DRESSED CHRISTIANS (4:20-29)

4:20-21 What is the secret of Christ-likeness? (Matt. 11:29; 13:9-23; Ps. 19:1-4; Isa. 50:4,5)

Darkness of mind is the cause of ignorance, ignorance and consequent obduracy of heart are the cause of alienation from God. This is both the logical and theological order of sequence. The soul in its natural state cannot discern the things of God -- therefore it does not know them, therefore the heart is hard and therefore it is destitute of holiness. This is what the apostle teaches in 1 Cor. 2:14-16. The blind cannot see; therefore they are ignorant of the beauty of creation, therefore they are destitute of delight in its glories. You cannot heal them by light. The eye must first be opened. Then comes vision, and then joy and love. This view of the passage is in accordance with the analogy of Scripture; which constantly represents regeneration as necessary to spiritual discernment, and spiritual discernment as necessary to holy affections. [Hodge 254]

4:22-24 Are we mere passive participants in the putting on of our new wardrobe? (Rom. 12:1,2)

But this complete moral revolution is not accomplished either by one supreme effort of our own will or by any momentary shock of Divine power. It must be carried through in detail by a long, laborious, and sometimes painful process of self discipline. The process lasts as long as life lasts. [Dale 311]

... and be renewed in the spirit of your minds. This verb is a present infinitive, in distinction to those of verses 22 and 24 which are aorists. It indicates that, in addition to the decisive rejection of the old and assumption of the new, implicit in conversion, a daily -- indeed a continuous -- inward renewal of our outlook is involved in being a Christian. If heathen degradation is due to the futility of their minds, then Christian righteousness depends on the constant renewing of our minds. [Stott 182]

4:25 Should TRUTH ever be compromised for the "unity" of the body (or "organization")?

... the great purpose of the Gospel is our moral renewal; that moral renewal is a creation after God's image; that new creation has to be put on or appropriated by us; the great means of appropriating it is contact with God's truth. [MacLaren *Expositions* 248]

Nothing, therefore, can be more contrary to Scripture than to undervalue divine

truth, and to regard doctrines as matters pertaining merely to the speculative understanding. Righteousness and holiness, morality and religion, are the **products of the truth, without which they cannot exist.** [Hodge 266, emphasis added]

There is also the lie of silence, and maybe it is even commoner. Andre Maurois, in a memorable phrase, speaks of "the menace of things unsaid." It may be that in some discussion a man by his silence gives approval to some course of action which he knows is wrong. It may be that a man withholds warning or rebuke when he knows quite well he should have given it. [Barclay 155]

4:26,27 Is anger a work of the flesh? (Gal. 5:19,20)

There must be anger in the Christian life, but it must be the right kind of anger. Bad temper and irritability are without defence; but there is an anger without which the world would be a poorer place. The world would have lost much without the blazing anger of Wilberforce against the slave trade or of Shaftesbury against the labour conditions of the nineteenth century. ... the selfless anger which is disciplined into the service of Christ and of our fellow men is one of the great dynamic forces of the world. [Barclay 155-156]

4:28 What is the advantage of money to the Christian?

"Do not steal" was the eighth commandment of Moses' law. It had and still has a wide application, not only to the stealing of other people's money or possessions, but also to tax evasions and customs dodges which rob the government of their dues, to employers who oppress their workers, and to employees who give poor service or work short time. [Stott 187]

4:29 Notice the tightrope we each walk when doing out TRUTH to others? (cf. v.15)

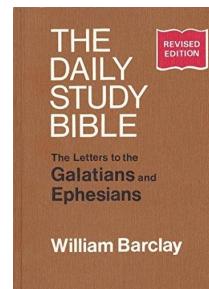
Of all the manifestations of the flesh, none is more unfettered than is the liberty of speech; but this must be restrained in the child of God. Words which do not edify are quite sure to injure, and things which cannot be said confidently in His presence are unfit for the hearing of others. [Chafer 141]

Study 8c: WALKING in the SPIRIT (4:30-32)

4:30 How does Paul conceive the Holy Spirit? (cf. Isaiah 63:7-10)

It is evident from this that the Holy Spirit is fully personal, for *lypeo* is to cause sorrow, pain or distress, and only persons can feel these things. But what grieves him? Since he is the "Holy Spirit", he is always grieved by **unholiness**, and since he is the "one Spirit" (2:18; 4:4), **disunity** will also cause him grief. In fact, anything incompatible with the purity or unity of the church is incompatible with his own nature and therefore hurts him. One might add that because he is also the "Spirit of truth", through whom God has spoken, he is upset by all our misuse of speech, which has been Paul's topic in the preceding verse ... For the Holy Spirit is a sensitive Spirit. He hates sin, discord and falsehood, and shrinks away from them. Therefore, if we wish to avoid hurting him, we shall shrink from them too. Every Spirit-filled believer desires to bring him pleasure, not pain. [Stott 189]

Though he will not finally withdraw from those in whom he dwells, yet when grieved



Where would we be without the blazing anger of Wilberforce and Shaftesbury?

he withholds the manifestations of his presence. [Hodge 275]

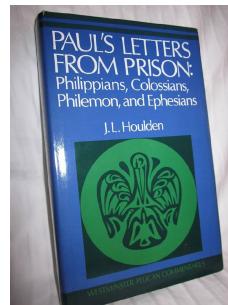
4:31-32 Though the Spirit doesn't "walk" on the Christian, what danger is still there? (Rom. 8:3-13; Gal. 5:16-18)

There is bitterness (*pikria*). The Greeks defined this word as *long standing resentment*, as the spirit which refuses to be reconciled. So many of us have a way of nursing our wrath to keep it warm, of brooding over the insults and the injuries which we have received. Every Christian might well pray that God would teach him how to forget. [Barclay 159]

wrath ... the habitual readiness to be inflamed, **and anger** ... the eruption of the habit, **and all outcry** of intemperate, uncontrolled, assertion of grievance, **and railing**, abusive words against others, aye, even down to the most easily allowed expressions of harsh and loveless criticism ... [Moule 235]

slander (*blasphemia*) is speaking evil of others, especially behind their backs, and so defaming and even destroying their reputation. The sixth word is *malice* (*kakia*), or ill will, wishing and probably plotting evil against people. Alternatively, it may be inclusive of the five preceding vices, namely "silently harboured grudge, indignant outburst, seething rage, public quarrel and slanderous taunt." There is no place for any of these horrid things in the Christian community ... [Stott 190]

Why no "second chance" resurrection?



... this description of the pagan way of life is closely paralleled in Rom. 1:21, especially the reference to its *futility*, and to the *darkened* state of their minds (v.18). In both passages, though more clearly in Rom. 1, pagan immorality is seen as wilful and culpable; it is *due to their hardness of heart* (cf. Rom. 2:5) ... That is, it was not inevitable (e.g. as part of the divine plan), but was the result of deliberate refusal of the moral light available to them in their own thought and conscience. In one respect *Ephesians* states this more explicitly than *Romans*. In Rom. 1:24,26, Paul says that after their refusal to infer the patent truth of God from the created order, God himself gave them up to moral perversion; here (v.19) it is their own doing. [J.L. Houlden, *Paul's Letters from Prison*, p. 317]

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