

Learning Christ

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I'd like you to turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 4. I just want to read verse 17 through 21. My last notes from Ephesians were in February. So it's been six or seven months since we were last here. Verse 17 forms somewhat of a natural division. It's a new section. Verse 17, the Apostle Paul writing to the church at Ephesus. "Now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do..." It's literally an infinitive verb. You're no longer to walk "in the futility of their minds. They're darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous..." Some translations say "being past feeling." There's no more feeling. That's what a callous is. "And they have given themselves up to sensuality." Again, some translations might say "unbridled lust." "Greedy to practice every kind of impurity." Now, Romans 1, Ephesians 2, and Ephesians 4 give us some of the best, most thorough, most graphic description of the lost man. Now notice verse 20. "But that is not the way you learned Christ." And that's the title of my message: Learning Christ. "That is not the way you learned Christ assuming that you have heard..." If you have the ESV, you're going to see the word "about." That word is not in the original. There is a difference between hearing Him and hearing about Him. Now when He speaks, He may tell you about Himself, but this isn't just hearing about Christ - this is hearing Christ. Not about. I think the ESV did wrong. You just don't throw words like that indiscriminately around. "Assuming that you have heard Him," or "If indeed you have heard Him and were taught in Him as the truth is in Jesus."

What Is Morality?

Now, I want to talk to you just for a second about morality. What is morality? A person that's moral. (Incomplete thought) If you basically look at a dictionary definition of the word morality it's basically conformity to a set of rules. Who's rules? Well, whoever's. Different people have different standards of what morality looks like; what's supposed to be right conduct. Morality is a system of morals. It's a system of rules that a person is supposed to keep and it's expected that if you keep them, then you're moral. Now, the thing about Christianity, is there a standard of righteousness? Yes, indeed, there is in Christianity. But here's the thing, Scripture doesn't just give you the moral code. Scripture goes beyond that. It always presses us to realize why certain things are right or certain things are wrong. Have you ever noticed all the words, especially, we've been going through Paul - have you ever noticed words like "so," "but," "and," "wherefore," "for"? Those words come in because Paul is arguing. Paul is logically developing a case for things. Paul doesn't just say "do this" or "don't do that." I mean, he does say "do this," "don't do that," but he gives us reasons. He develops why. Morality is more or less a set of blind rules. You're told to do something for the mere reason that it's one of the rules. Just do it. (Incomplete thought) I think this is very erroneous when you get preachers who will just simply tell you what to do or what not to do, but they don't reason from Scripture as to why. They don't appeal to the mind. They don't make a case. They don't show you. Because Scripture doesn't just come in and say, just "don't do this," or just "do this." Scripture comes in and there's some

rationale. The truth is we can reduce Scripture to where it's no more than morality because we just say, it's kind of like what you see here - I mean, look at this. You go down to verse 28. "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor." Well, see, somebody could preach that and just say that. We ought not to steal. But that's to miss what Paul's doing here. You have to go back up to v. 25. What happens in 25? You get a "therefore."

What Are the "Therefore's" There For?

What are "therefore's" there for? They connect our doctrine to our practice. They give you reasons. They appeal to your mind. Live a certain way. Don't live a certain way, because certain things are real, certain things are true. You can get preachers who just stand up and they say, "do this." They can make Scripture into nothing more than rules. We don't want to do that. We want to hear the rationale here. For a preacher to do that - to reduce principles in Scripture to just mere and sheer morality is to miss something. Christianity always causes us to think. The truth is Christianity is a religion of the mind. So often people look at Christians and they think we're mindless. They think we're simple. They think to believe those things, you've got to be naive. You've got to be backwards. That's just the opposite. Scripture everywhere appeals to our reason, to our thinking, to our understanding. Isn't that what God says? "Come, let us reason together." He doesn't just say, "do this," "do that." It's reason. Look at v. 25, "Therefore..." What does that flow out of? That flows out of the reality of v. 22 that we're to put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of our mind, put on the new man. "Therefore..." You see what it flows out of. You're a new creation. Therefore, you don't steal. Therefore, you don't use your mouth the way you used to. There's an argument being set forth here. Paul wants to engage our mind and think. It's not just "do this" or "not do this." We're supposed to be a people that are thinking. There needs to be rationale behind our actions; why we do something, why we don't do something. The "so's" - if we fail to realize the "so's" and the "because's" and the "therefore's" of Paul's writings, we don't really understand him at all. We walk by faith and our faith is not mindless. Our faith grabs hold of truth. We believe things in our minds and we act out the reality of those facts.

This is precisely what we're confronted with in v. 17-24. I've been dealing with v. 25 and following, but if you go back to these first, I want you to see this. Here, the word that takes us beyond morality is this little three letter word: It's the word "but" in v. 20. Ephesians 4:20, "But that is not the way you learned Christ." Can we tell a Christian to just simply stop acting like a lost person? Stop being Gentile-ish. Can we just tell a person that? Well, of course, we can, but if we stop there, we do what Paul does not do. Paul doesn't stop at that. Don't walk like Gentiles walk. Why? Why shouldn't we? I think this is a very interesting thing that he appeals to. It's a tremendous reality. "That is not the way you learned Christ." What a picture of Christianity! Not just: you're not going to hell. That's not the way you learned Christ.

And you know what? As I put this together, my fear is this: I wonder if we feel this, if we even feel the rationale. You know, if you say to somebody, like Jesus comes along and He says, you really should cut that hand off or gouge out that eye because it's better to go into life maimed than to have your whole body cast into hell. That's a rationale that grips us. There's fear. We feel that. We feel the weight of that argument. Do that and you perish. Don't be deceived, the unrighteous don't inherit the Kingdom, fornicators, adulterers - we feel that. But do

you feel this? "That's not the way you learned Christ." Do you feel like, oh, I feel the force of that? I suspect we don't quite honestly.

How Does One Learn Christ?

So let's just think about it a bit. I want us to feel this. Now think with me here. Notice what he says. "That is not the way you learned Christ." Now he's actually going to say this three different ways. You'll notice the next verse. He's using synonyms here - synonymous phrases. Notice, "the way you learned Christ assuming that you have heard..." again, toss that "about." If you've got an ESV, just scratch it right out of your Bible. It shouldn't be there. You see, you learn Christ. You hear Christ. Not just about Him, you hear Him. And then notice what it says next: "...And were taught in Him." Get that. We're taught from the inside. Not from the outside looking in. We're taught from the inside. We're taught in Jesus. (Incomplete thought)

Here's the thing, people can sit and listen to the Gospel their entire lives and never hear it. Being taught by Christ - do you see what he's saying? He's saying to these Ephesians, look, this isn't the way you learned Christ, assuming you've heard Him. What he's doing here is he's making the assumption you might not have heard Him. Well, wait a second. You're sitting in the church. You're hearing the preaching. See, somebody can sit and listen to the Gospel and never actually hear it. Our Lord said things like this: "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and is now here..." Now, listen to Jesus. There's an hour coming and it's now here. That was 2,000 years ago, so it's still here. There's an hour coming, when what? "The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live." You see, there's a voice - the voice of the Son of God. Those who hear will live, but not all hear, because not all live.

Or you have something like this, a similar truth. Jesus said this: "It is written in the prophets, 'and they will all be taught by God.'" Who? All the ones who are real. Not everybody. All the ones who are truly born of God. Listen to what He says. "Everyone who has heard and learned..." There's two of our words right there. Everyone who has heard and learned. Now here it's not so much heard and learned of Christ, but heard and learned of the Father "...comes to Me." So if the Father speaks and you hear, you know how you can tell somebody hears? They truly come to Christ. No playing games. He doesn't say they come to church. He doesn't say they make some decision. The reality is they come to Christ. Why? Because they've heard. But not all hear.

Do you remember? Sometimes you probably just read across this. It's uncomfortable language, so we just get by it as soon as we can, and what does that mean? We scratch our heads and then we move on. "You have been" (this is what John says) - "You have been anointed by the Holy One and you all have knowledge." Again, who's "all"? Not everybody indiscriminately. It's all who have been anointed. You've been anointed by the Holy One and when you get this anointing, you have knowledge. That's 1 John 2:20, but listen to what he says in v. 27. "The anointing..." the anointing - that's an uncomfortable word, and yet it's a reality. John says this: "the anointing that you received from Him abides in you..." and this is what the anointing does to us: "You have no need that anyone should teach you, but as His anointing teaches you about everything..." you like that? God's anointing teaches you about everything. That doesn't mean it teaches you about calculus. It doesn't mean it teaches you about weather patterns. What it means is this, it teaches you everything that you need to know to have eternal

life. It teaches you the important things. "His anointing teaches you about everything and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you." It has taught you. The anointing has taught you. What happens? You get taught. Why? Because you hear. You hear what other people don't hear. This is the reality. It's the same distinction we make between seeing and perceiving.

Diego and I were just down in Ecuador. We went to go see whales. By the way, we saw whales. We saw 50 ton, 50 feet long humpback whales coming sometimes fully out of the water. But you know when we first got there, it was almost like the Lord brought them into us so that we could see them, but when we first got there, there was nothing. I mean, we got there, and Carlos, who is leading the work down there - we climbed up on top of this mountain. And he'd point: "Look there!" And from the vantage point on top of the mountain you could literally see, I don't know, 20 miles, 30 miles, 50 miles out there. And he's pointing at something. At first, I looked and I saw ocean, but I didn't perceive what I should perceive. But then there it was! Whoa! You know how they blow the spray when they breathe? It's like, I see it! There they are! But this is the same way. We can look and not perceive. I looked at first and I saw ocean, but I couldn't perceive the whales. But it's like hearing. A person can sit and they can hear the preaching and not really hear the preaching. What this is all implying is this, there is a voice. There is a voice. When people are proclaiming truth, when somebody stands in a pulpit and proclaims the truth, there is their voice, but then there is The Voice. And the issue in all of this, you see the whole rationale here is you don't live like Gentiles because you heard a voice, and it said something to you. That's the reality.

It's like you can see and not see. And there are some who do see. It's kind of like looking at those whales or looking at a sunset or looking at the mountains or looking at a flower. Some will say, "Wow! I see the glory of God." And they'll worship. And some will say, "Huh? It's just a flower." You see, some see. And some just see. That's the issue.

To hear Christ and be taught of Him and learn Christ, it doesn't just mean that you've listened to sermons. That doesn't just mean that you have a Bible. It doesn't even mean that you've found the sermon interesting or cried. That kind of thing happens all the time. Or felt your emotions stirred. Or you felt some kind of conviction. You can be moved upon by a sermon and yet not hear the Voice. You can even know what was said. People are able to dissect sermons or dissect theology from an intellectual standpoint, but they never hear the Voice.

Listen, this is a reality. And this is all that is behind Paul's argument here. He's assuming this. He's assuming you Ephesians and you San Antonians - he's assuming this: there is a reason why you can't walk like Gentiles, because of the Voice. And it has said something to you if you're real. You know why some people can just go along and they can attend church, they can own a Bible, and they can continue to be like Gentiles? Because they haven't been taught in a way that is very personal and very real, comes home to the heart, to the conscience, to the mind, to the understanding. To accept the truth with the intellect alone is not the same as learning Christ. The Christian is anointed. What a truth that is!

What Does This Look Like?

What does this look like? What happens is you don't just hear the truth; you don't just hear the Gospel - you do hear it, but it takes your whole being. It draws you in. You realize the significance of the Gospel in a way that you've never realized it before. You realize the

significance of Christ. You realize the significance of all of this for you. It becomes very personal. This is for me. He died for me. He thought about me on that cross. He laid down His life for His sheep. I'm one of the sheep. This is real. Christianity is real. You hear that voice. I was blown away. There was a voice and I heard it. A voice came through. I had read Scripture before. I had read things that I got from this nursing home where my grandmother was. But I never really heard. I had heard people try to explain the Gospel to me, but it didn't come home, until that one day I was reading there in one of those chapters of "The Gospel According to Jesus," and the voice came in. I wasn't hearing John MacArthur anymore. I was hearing another voice. And that voice taught me. That voice teaches us things. A man learns Christ. And a man who learns Christ is a man who says this is the most important thing in the world. This is everything. There is nothing else beyond this. There is nothing more important in all the world than this. And we can know many other things. We can know calculus. And we can know other things that are important, but what we become gripped with is this is the most important thing to know. And even though I should forget everything else, or not know everything else, I've got to know this. This is it. This is the pinnacle. This is the truth. This is learning Christ. It is to be swept away by the overwhelming reality. It's almost like you get this kind of thing from the Apostle John. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called sons of God." Here's a man that's gripped. He's gripped by that voice. He's gripped by this reality. This isn't some dry, musty truth. This is something that grips his whole life. He's never seen or heard anything like this. The voice.

What Do You Say To This?

And I would just say this, what do you say to this? What do you say to this? Have you heard this? I'm talking about the Word of God coming in power to your soul. Where God speaks to you: Thou art the man. That's how God spoke to David. You are the sinner. You are the one. It's like we looked at in the book of Genesis. Suddenly, Adam is exposed. It's very personal. God is speaking to you. Put your name in there. Adam, where are you? God says that to you. Where are you? You suddenly realize where you are. You see things in a way that you never saw things before. There's this voice. You've learned something that you'll never forget. Suddenly you look up and it's like I know why Christ has come. I know why Christ died. I know what this is all about. I've learned something. I know what He's done. I see the significance of all of it. My life depends on it. I know that the Gospel of Christ is true. One of the things I was gripped with in the very beginning is: this is true! This is true! All I knew about Christianity was nominal Catholicism. And suddenly I'm hearing God speak. Suddenly, my eyes are open. Suddenly, I can see the whales! I mean, I see it! And that's what he's talking about. You cannot continue to walk like Gentiles if suddenly this learning of Christ becomes a reality and His voice comes to you. And put your name in there. David, John, Paul. Follow Me. Come away from her. What fellowship does light have with darkness? Come out of her. We just recognize this is supreme. This is all.

Have You Experienced This?

And the question is this: Have you experienced this? Yes, but not all. Notice, "that is not the way you learned Christ assuming..." What a word! Or, "if..." "Assuming that you have heard

Him and were taught in Him." (unintelligible) That's not the way you learned Christ, assuming that you actually did. See, he's being gracious. You talk like that when you're assuming the best, but it also does present the possibility that some may not actually have learned Christ. You know one of the main reasons that people continue to act like Gentiles? It's because they haven't learned. They may be in the church. They maybe listen to the preaching. But they've never heard that voice. They can hear the preaching. They can hear the preacher's voice. But Christ's voice? It's not there. And the thing is they won't admit it. You know why? Well, look at what the characteristics of the Gentile is. If you look at verses 17, 18, 19, this shows us what these people are like. The reality is this, the very fact that they're still Gentile means that they're darkened in their understanding. They're ignorant. They're hard. And they're callous. You know, callous, again - without feeling. You see, we have some Gentiles in the church right now, but they won't admit it because they don't feel it. Because that voice doesn't resonate with them. They're very callous. Callous is that thick fibrous - I can't feel anymore. A working man gets those on his hands. He can't feel. He can touch something hot or he can get poked, but if you've got thick callouses, you don't feel it, It brings somebody beyond feeling. So this is what happens, you get people, they profess to be Christians. They're still Gentile. They're in the church. And you can talk to them about learning Christ. They're in the dark. They can't even see it. They can't even understand. They can't feel spiritual realities.

(Incomplete thought) I don't know what some of your thoughts are. I recognize we've gone through a season here. Maybe this is startling to some people that what, 9 or 10 people we've disciplined over the last 10 or 11 months. You know, I was just recently reading. Spurgeon was saying they had a season of revival, and he said he knew that a number of the people that had come in during that revival weren't genuine. He knew they were fake. They had never heard the voice. The same problem back then. This isn't new to us. He recognized he had these people in the church back then.

You know, when we first came to the east side, many of you know this story, we had 10 people. We had 12 when we started over on the south side. We had 10 when we came over here to Hackberry. And you know what happened. During those years we were over at the restaurant, God brought us tremendous growth. A lot of young people being converted. And you know what we're dealing with now? We're dealing with the tares. Now, we can hope that they're not all tares. We can hope that some may be put out to Satan and they will prove true and they will learn not to blaspheme or learn not to fornicate or learn not to lie. And that by the destruction of the flesh, they'll be saved in the day of the Lord. We can hope that. But the reality is, brethren, a lot of these people that we put out, we put out because they're still Gentiles. They came in. They've never really heard the voice. They've never really been taught. You see, because Paul's making this assumption. If you've heard that voice, it's taught you something. That's what he's wanting them to remember. Remember what that voice of Christ taught you. Remember. The truth is we have some people in the church that can't remember. Why? Because they're hard. They're calloused. Some are given to unbridled lust. Some are Gentiles still.

So here's the thing, Paul is saying, I know what Christ teaches. And I know this, it doesn't line up with acting like a Gentile. If you've heard that voice, you too ought to know what Paul knows, that Jesus teaches us something different. The point is this: He whose life differs

not at all from that of the unbeliever, what have they learned from Christ? Apparently, they haven't.

Qualities of the Gentiles

So what I want to do is just want to simply end this message by doing this: I want to look at each of the v. 17, 18, 19 Gentile-ish qualities. And I just want to look at them in light of learning Christ. Let's just think about that for a few minutes.

Futility

The first one is futility. "Now this I say and I testify in the Lord that you must not be like the Gentiles." What is the first thing that he brings out about the Gentiles? Now if you were listening to our brother Lucas as he read this morning from Romans 1, you will have heard the same reality. Futility. This is what Paul sees as trademark of being Gentile. Futile. The futility of their minds. It's not just that they're futile anywhere and everywhere in their whole lives. Yes, but their lives are guided by their brains. It's their thoughts. This is what we must not allow into our lives. It has to do with the mind - the futility of the mind. I know months ago back in February I actually dealt with this, but I just want to very quickly in passing bring it up again and think about futility. Or maybe your Bible says "vanity." But it's the idea of this: it's the idea of having a mind - it's not about being vain in having an ability to build a house. It's not that man's mind is vain in its capacity to figure out mathematical problems. That's not the issue. What God is saying here is that when it comes to things that really matter, man is futile. Man never arrives at the goal he intends to arrive at. The truth is nobody - nobody - really intends to go to hell. They don't. They have a plan. Oh, I know you can find somebody that thinks that it's a party and ha-ha. Yeah, but you have them face death and see whether they're laughing and talking so merry. People like that say that when they're in health. Futility. You ask people out there: do you intend to go to hell?

Diego and I just sat down with young people down in Ecuador. And I asked that question. Do you believe it's likely you're going to be in hell when you die? Well, you know everybody has a plan how they're not going to do it. And yet the reality is that Jesus says few there be that find life. So most people miss heaven. They'd never intend it. A lot of people going to church - they didn't intend... And yet that's precisely where they wind up. Why? Because all their thoughts were futile. They were empty. They didn't lead to the end. Their purposes are frustrated. There's a nothingness. There's a purposelessness in it. All the thinking that people do. You have people running around, they're trying to find some purpose in life. Some people get into sports and some people get into gardening. Some people get into cars. Some people get into aerobics. People are always trying to find purpose in life. But the reality is that what God is saying here is that when you basically look at the Gentile and everything - you remember what Romans 3 says. Man is worthless. You take it all. It's just worthless. It's purposeless. It never arrives at any end. This is God's assessment of all the activity that goes on in the minds of unbelievers. Unbelievers - what are they thinking about? What are they planning? You've got people in colleges and people in government and people that are driving trucks and people that are just out walking the streets with their can of beer in hand. Where are they all going? What's all happening? It's just futile. What a tremendous, what an overwhelming assessment of where

man is when it comes to true significance, when it comes to anything of true spiritual value. Take all of the Gentiles, all of the lost populations, add it all up, and it's utterly, utterly empty, devoid. It doesn't ever bring anybody to any goal of any worth. (incomplete thought) All the people out here and some in here, you're living a life that the truth is it leads nowhere but to hell. And that's it.

You know the world at large thinks very few people go to hell. They do. Hitler goes to hell. But most people are good. That's basically the mindset of the world. That is such vain thinking. It just adds up to nothing. They build their little gods and they create their little religions and where does it all go? All their desires, all their plans, all their schemes, all their searching for truth, all their planning on where to eat. Do you ever hear people? Do you ever hear people of the world? What they think about? What they talk about? (incomplete thought) What are they obsessed with? They get obsessed with stuff in this world. It's kind of like John Piper. I know this is an old picture, but Piper came across that story about these people in their retirement picking up shells. Put your own spin on it. We see it all around us. I see it in my lost family. The things they talk about, the things they plan. I get with some of my family and it's like where are we going to eat? That's what they talk about. Where are we eating next? That's all the talk about. And then you eat at the next place and they're already talking about the next place you're going to eat. That's how it is. And you've got people, they're searching for meaning in something. They're searching for meaning in life. They're looking for an explanation that's going to make somehow life worth living. Somehow I'm going to freeze my brain and they'll be able to bring me back in 2,000 years when we have the technology or whatever. They're looking into outer space. We're going to find some life out there somewhere. It's all going to bring meaning. And what happens? You know what happens? You go into the nursing home. Go to the nursing home. You've never been there? Go there. Look at people when they get old. Cynical. It's horrible. And you know what? These people? They had prime. They had youth. They had all their thoughts one day. And they were going somewhere. They had their theories. They had their religion. But you know what? Life without Christ is empty. This is not the way we learn Christ.

You think about what Jesus taught. See, Jesus looked at men and He said we're not talking emptiness, boys. We're going to talk about what's most valuable. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? What will a man give in exchange for his soul? You know when that rich young ruler came? He knew. Jesus knew. He had all those riches. But He also knew this, you can spend your life pursuing riches. You die. You go to hell. And you're nothing but a fool. And He looks at that rich young ruler. The way Jesus taught, it was not about vanity. It was not about futility. It was not about emptiness and purposelessness. You know what He said to him? You, young man, you take all those riches and you go sell them all and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. See, that's not emptiness. That's forever. And then the man went away sorrowful and you know what he said? How difficult it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. You see what He's talking to this man about? Treasure in Heaven. Entering Heaven. See, that's altogether valuable. What will it profit a man?

You know what Jesus taught? He taught us the way to come to the end of your life and hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." You talk about joy! "Enter into the joy of your Lord." He taught us how in the end to hear, "I was naked, and you clothed Me." See, these aren't

empty things. He taught us how to have treasure - true treasure: eternal life; how to inherit the Kingdom. He doesn't teach us to be vain, to be foolish. "This day you'll be with Me in Paradise." Do you think that sounds like vanity? But a lot of people are trying to make paradise here, but that is vanity. Because even if it halfway resembles paradise, it's always got its blemishes and it runs out and eventually you get old and you can't keep it. You can't hold on to anything here. It's all going to be taken away.

Vanity

Vanity. What this makes me think of... we had a fellowship down there in Ecuador. Jonathan and I were talking to a young man. He's a veterinarian. So he's got customers throughout the day, but he has gaps between customers. I'm going to get back to that reality. But he said this, he said, "You know, I used to be very prayerful. I really had a burden to pray." He said, "I used to be very evangelistic, loved to share the Gospel. I used to fast often." He said, "Now, I don't have any desire for that." So he's asking me to diagnose him. And I said this to him, one of two things are true. Either one, you received it all gladly before, but it wasn't real and so you haven't endured. I said, or, you're a Christian, but you're sick. And if you're sick, it means sin has come in somewhere. Well, he really tried to defend himself. He was really trying to dodge my words. And he'd make arguments about what was true in his life, but I kept coming back to this: if you are a Christian, you've allowed sin in. But you know we kept pressing this, pressing this, pressing this. And you know what he finally admitted? He admitted that between clients, between patients, which was a lot of his time, he basically admitted I spend the entire day on Facebook. And I said that's it right there.

Let me ask you this. Does Jesus teach us to use our time and waste it? And not redeem it? And just get sucked into endless videos? Or endless Facebook arguments and disputations that amount to nothing? They're vain. They're foolish. Is that what Jesus taught us to do? How did you learn Jesus? Not to run around being futile, but to redeem your time well. He said, "Follow Me," and He said we need to work while it's day. Use your time wisely. That's what He taught us. Your time's running out. It's going to become dark. It's going to become night. You only have a little segment and it's what you do in there that's going to get a "Well done" or a "Not so well done." How did He teach us? Did He teach us to be futile? If there's anybody in the world that ought to be using their lives well it's the people who read such promises that their works follow them; that the things you do here are going to follow you right out into eternity. "Go sell all that you have and you'll have treasure in Heaven." But do you know in Luke 12, He tells each one of us the same thing. Pretty foolish that we don't go do more when so much eternal profit is there to be had.

Darkened

Now here's the next thing: darkened. Ephesians 4:18, "They're darkened in their understanding." Now again, I would just say this. First thing: futility of mind. Darkened in understanding. Again, it comes back to the thoughts. The brain, the mind, the thinking. The fall, the fall - Adam, what have you done? This brought the most disastrous and devastating consequences on the minds of men! We don't typically think this. Why? Because we see people out here. Some of these people - we like them and they're nice and we work with lost people.

Some are beautiful. We look at them and it's hard to imagine that in their minds all of this is happening. Man tries to understand. He does. He looks at things. You know he does. We have scientists in this world. They're trying to look. They're trying to study. Even recently in the Genesis series, I was talking about guys like Dawkins. They are trying to understand. They look at the world around them. They're trying to gather in the facts. But, there's a problem. It's all shrouded in darkness and shadow.

Like I said, this is the same flow that we heard earlier in Scripture reading. Listen to how Paul says this in Romans 1. "They became futile in their thinking." That's exactly what we have here in Ephesians 4:17. "Futile in their thinking." Notice the next thing. "Their foolish hearts were darkened." Well, that's what we have here. Darkened. There's darkness in their understanding. But you know the thing that Paul adds in Romans 1 that you don't get here is the term "fool." Foolish. Did you know this? The sinner is a fool. Isn't that what Scripture says? A fool is one who lacks understanding. A man who does something without thinking. We say, oh, what a fool to have gone and done that! If only he would have used his head. You see, that's what a fool is. A fool is somebody that doesn't think. They do things without thinking. It's a fool who says there's no God. What does it say there in Romans 1? Claiming to be wise, what? They became fools. Their foolish hearts were darkened. That's the thing. This is the state of the unbeliever. He claims to be wise. Isn't that what the world does? You have all these people out there. They've got these intellects. They've got this education. They've got these high titles. And they boast. They boast about their intellect. They boast about their degrees. They boast about their education. They boast about their understanding. And you know what, Christians can often become troubled. Ooh, you know, why is it that all the wise people, all the learned people, all the highly educated people don't believe in Creation? And this can trouble us. But you see what's being said? They're fools. They claim to be wise. Listen to them. They claim to be wise. They claim to know it all. They claim we're the fools. But you see what's going on in the brain? They can't see. They can't see what you see. Kind of like looking at the whales. If you once see Christ, and you once have Him speak to your soul, your sins are forgiven. My sins not in part, but the whole. Brethren, we sing that and you know why this place resonates and it just bounces off the walls like it does? Because you feel it! Yes! What a truth! Christ has regarded my helpless estate. If that only came home to them, they'd be here with us. But they can't see. They're in the dark. They say they aren't Christian because they've got a brain. They mock us. They're brilliant. They're great thinkers. They're rational. They can reason. That's their position.

But you know it was the same in our Lord's day. The great people, the great leaders in our Lord's day, do you know what Paul said? Do you remember what he said in 1 Corinthians 2? He said this, "We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God which God decreed before the ages for our glory." None of the rulers of this age - the rulers, the high and important people in high places - they, none of them, "the rulers of this age understood this. For if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." If they would have recognized who He is and what He was here for and that their only hope rested in Him, their only deliverance from the fires of hell, they wouldn't have killed Him. If they would have recognized this is Immanuel; if that would have really come in upon their brains and their believing... (incomplete thought).

I've told this story before, but I love this story. I want to tell it again. Back in the early 1800's, the youngest prime minister ever in England was a man by the name of William Pitt. Pitt

was brilliant. And one of Pitt's close friends was William Wilberforce, the liberator of the slaves. You may know him or have watched documentaries on him. Pitt was a nominal Christian and Wilberforce knew it. And Wilberforce - he was real. He had been genuinely converted. There was a great preacher preaching by the name of Richard Cecil. I don't know who that is, but Wilberforce loved the guy. Wilberforce loved to hear him. And he was anxious to get Pitt, the prime minister - he was anxious to get him to hear Cecil preaching. One day, Pitt agreed. So the story goes, Cecil was preaching at his best. Wilberforce was lifted to the highest heaven. He was just rejoicing in the truth coming forth. The service ended and as they were walking out together, Pitt said, "You know, Wilberforce, I have not the slightest idea what that man has been talking about." Brilliant? Just a poor, backward, blind, dark fool. With all of his learning and a high position. And the leaders in our Lord's day were in the same boat.

Christian, don't get bent out of shape when all the leaders and the great people in this world don't line up. Don't let that bother you. There's nothing in it. "Peter, who does the world say that I am?" Ah, they say this, they say that and the other. It's the same today. I'll ask you. What does the world say about Christ? And you can fill in all the blanks just like Peter did. "But Peter, who do you say that I am?" Oh, I see who You are. And you know what Jesus said? "Flesh and blood did not teach that to you." You see, Peter heard the voice. He was taught of God. He says, "My Father taught you that, Peter." You know Jesus turned to the disciples one day. He said, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see." Not just seeing the ocean without seeing the whales. Blessed are those who see the whales. You could see those in the ocean.

Brethren, one of the things we need to recognize is this: Guys like William Pitt or your neighbor or your child, brethren, we really need to pity them. We can get frustrated with them. We get frustrated. We preach the Gospel. Why aren't they responding? And I recognize even here, we get Gentiles in the church. And we get frustrated with them. Impurity - leaven comes into the church. And you know there is a way to deal with it. There is a way we have to biblically deal with sin in the church. But we really need to pity people. Why? Because brethren, the reality is this, when you come to the end of that account in Matthew 11 where Jesus was rebuking those cities for not repenting when they saw His works, He lifts up His voice to His Father and He said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of Heaven, that You have hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and You have revealed these things to babes." You see, it's God who causes that voice to speak to one and not to another. And we can look at this and recognize: why? Lord, why was I made to hear when others would rather starve than come? Have you ever felt that way? And we need to recognize that. What makes one to differ from another? It's the Lord Himself.

Ignorance

We're getting close to the end, folks. Alienated, ignorant, hard. Verse 18, "Alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them." Again, we have ignorance. There's this darkness of understanding, futility of mind and now ignorance. And obviously ignorance is another thing that happens in the head. "They're alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of heart." There's a path here. (incomplete thought) The hardness leads to the ignorance. The hard ignorance leads to alienation from the life of God. The natural man is alienated from God's own life. That's the reality in this. God is

everywhere. God is alive. God is real. God is the greatest reality that there is. And man walks around not knowing it. It's football season. Oh, they're excited about that - lots of people. They're excited about buying the beer. They're not thinking about God at all. They're separated. Man's not aware. This is the meaning. He's alienated from the life of God. You think about what Peter says: "partakers of the divine nature." That doesn't mean that we're God. It means you partake of Him. You partake of His divine nature. You're partaking of the life of God. This is what was lost in Eden. This is what happened when they were cast out. This is what happened when that sword kept them from coming back. It doesn't mean we're divine. We partake of God Himself. We partake of Him and His divinity. This is God allowing us to share in His doings. This is what it says. God shares His secret councils with us. He brings us into the inner chambers. God brings us into intimate fellowship with Him. That's what we lost. It's to know Him. Gentiles are utter strangers to God. Not the god they create in their minds - that's common. Commonplace. But they're entirely alien. That's what stranger is - or alienated. Man is fallen from the life of God. He's outside the garden. He can't get back in. He's outside. Life has become separated from God. It's lived without God. God isn't in all his thoughts. Man's just going along and he can keep God out. God created Him. God is the greatest reality. God upholds it all by the power of His Word. Man doesn't know it. He's just walking through it. He's not thinking about that at all. Man's just living in this wilderness. Man's lost the life of God. What we have, you know what Scripture says, "dead in trespasses and sins." That's a person who's alive physically. They're dead in trespasses and sins. They're separated. They're under the wrath of God. They're on the outside. Restless, troubled, dissatisfied. He makes his gods. He gets old. Again, the nursing home, you see the hopelessness, the despair grip them.

Do You Know God?

This is the question: Do you know God? That's eternal life. To know Thee, the true God, and the Christ who He has sent. Sharing the life of God. Why are men alienated? Well, there's only one answer. It says it's because of the ignorance that is in them. They don't know. They don't know God. Think about it, man has such a low and depraved taste. What God says in the Old Testament is they're trying to drink from broken cisterns. That's man. He says He's this fountain of living water and man has such low tastes. Man plays with his little trinkets obsessed. Broken cisterns. Bunyan portrays this: the muck raker. You know, raking the muck, raking the muck. I think it's part 2 of Pilgrim's Progress. He's raking the muck and there's an angel there holding a crown out. And he won't look up. He's just raking the muck.

Again, I want to bring this back to what Christ teaches us. Christ teaches us to look. Christ teaches us to look up. Christ would say things like this: "Look at the birds of the field." Look. Look around you. Look at the birds of the field. God provides for those. Will He not provide for you? Look around. There's no longer an alienation from God. God cares for you. God loves you. Look at this. Look, look, look! As the serpent was lifted up, so the Son of Man must be lifted up. Look! Look and live! Look and learn. Look around you. Jesus said this: I'm doing these works. If you're not going to believe because I tell you that I'm the Christ, believe because of the works that the Father sent Me to do. Look at the works! That's what John says. I didn't tell you all the works, but I told you some of them so you might believe He's the Christ and in believing He's the Christ, the Son of God, you might have eternal life. Look! That's what Christ

teaches us to do. Look at the birds. Look at the cross. Look at His works. Did He not say to His disciples: Consider the loaves and the fishes. He wants us to look around. He wants us to think. That's how He teaches us. And then you see these people are calloused. Due to the hardness of their heart they have become calloused. Man's ignorance. He's hard. It's self-inflicted. You saw there in Romans 1, he suppresses the truth. This is what men do because what? They're sensual - unbridled lust. They're greedy to practice every kind of impurity. Men who want their sin have to kill the conscience or they can't go on enjoying their sin. It doesn't work if your conscience is always telling you: you know you're going to hell for that. You know God is not pleased with that. Man can't do that. Men want to just live it up. Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. They want to shut it down. They're calloused, hard, unfeeling. All that means that man is unfeeling. This is why men can sit and hear the Gospel and remain unmoved. It's just hardness, callousness. He's no longer sensitive. You know what the promise of the New Covenant is. God says I'm going to give you a heart of flesh. I'm going to take that hard heart, that stony heart out.

Searing the Conscience

But you know what the problem is? When you kill the conscience, then when you want to feel, you can't feel. You know what a lot of sinners think? I'm going to enjoy my sin today and I'm going to repent when I get old. You know the problem with that? What they're wanting to do is feel when they get old, but they can't feel anything. They've killed the conscience. They've become so calloused that at such a point in life when they planned on repenting and getting right with God, now they can't feel anything. They're just hard and calloused.

Jesus Teaches Us to Feel

But you know what Jesus teaches? Does He not teach us to begin to feel? I just thought about the Lord. He doesn't teach us to be hard. He teaches us to feel. His voice makes us feel. His voice bids us feel. Even think about the joy. Rejoice! The fullness of joy. Feel. Feel. Or Jesus says, "Follow Me," and watch Him. He laid hands on the leper. He had compassion. He wants us to feel. Feel. He told us to love our enemy. Feel for your enemy. You know that early church got it. What did they do? They went out and they sold their property. Why? Because they felt. They couldn't see their brethren in need and not feel - there was sympathy there. We feel. We feel for the perishing. We feel for God's glory. We hate that that dishonors Him. We feel sin. The conscience is alive. We feel. We repent. We confess. The conscience comes alive at the voice of Christ. Well, brethren, when this voice comes we begin to feel. We feel the realities of Christianity. We feel the realities of God. We feel the realities of the presence of God. We feel the realities of the love of God. We feel love for Him. He calls us to feel. Christian, feel. That's what His voice says. Have compassion. See the needs of the widow and the orphan and feel. See the needs of the naked and the poor, those that sit in darkness, those that are sick, those that are in prison, those that are strangers, feel, feel, feel! We're alive. And Christ teaches us to feel. We haven't learned Christ in a way to be hard and stiff-necked. He said learn of Me. I'm meek and lowly in spirit. You'll find rest. Jesus says learn of Me. He groaned over that hardness. People upset that He was healing on the Sabbath Day (incomplete thought), or the woman who's a daughter of Abraham. He felt. He says I have compassion upon the crowds. How does Jesus teach us? He teaches us to feel. Not to be hard. Not to be futile. Not to be dark. Not to be

alienated. He teaches us to come close to God, embrace God, call upon God, dwell and abide in God's love. That's what He calls us to do. If we've heard His voice, we know. He calls us in another direction. Not to be Gentile. Christian, feel. Feel, feel. Rejoice and leap for joy. He wants us to feel. Learn of Me. What does He do from the cross? We heard it this morning. He looks down at His mother. He says, "John, you're now her son. Take care of her." Do you see? He feels. And He's the Teacher here. He says, "Learn of Me." Look at Him. What's He teaching you to do? Live this futile life on Facebook all the time? Being hard and insensitive? That's not it. That's not it at all.

And I'll tell you this, you want a good reason? You want a good "therefore"? Paul says this earlier and you remember this verse, he said, "so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." You know what's happening? God saves us to astonish the world. God saves us to astonish angels. And you know what happens when you live like a Gentile? You don't show the power of being taught by Christ. You don't just belittle yourself, your family, this church, you belittle the God who says through the church, I am displaying you before these rulers and authorities in heavenly places. And He's showing forth His manifold wisdom. Do you know when people look at you and you're living life like a Gentile, don't be surprised, brethren, that we as a church - that the elders in this church should move and lead you to put Gentile-ish people out of the church - people who are practicing fornication, people who are deceitful, people who are liars, people who are impure, people who are greedy, people who are not living like they're taught of Christ. Don't be surprised. Listen, God's honor is at stake. This isn't a matter of us being cruel to people. We're wanting to do what keeps the church pure. We're wanting to eradicate the leaven. Have you been taught of Christ? If you have, that's not the way you were taught - not to live like Gentiles.

Prayer

Father, I pray that this reality for Your glory, that Your manifold wisdom would be put on display by this church. Lord, we grieve when sin is found here. I know I grieve. It causes sighs and groans. Lord, You want Your people to hunger and thirst after righteousness. And I do. I hunger and thirst for a church that is righteous, brethren who are growing in grace, brethren who are being taught by the voice - that Voice, the Voice. We've learned of Christ. Teach us. Lord, we recognize, and we thank You, You hide these things from the wise and the prudent, and You reveal these things to babes. Peter, flesh and blood did not reveal that to you. Father, if we've had anything revealed to us, we know that it comes from You. And we know that the only thing that has made us different from others is grace. Lord, we pray that You would give us a deep feeling there - a feeling of compassion and pity for those who sit in darkness and are futile and whose way is going to end in hell. Lord, give us to feel. I pray in Christ's name, Amen.