

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, August 27, 2025 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

T H E B O O K O F

EPHESIANS

*How to live the Christian life*

**EPHESIANS: HOW TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE – PART 28**  
*“How Not to Live” - Ephesians 4:17-19*

*“<sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup> having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; <sup>19</sup> who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” – Ephesians 4:17-19 (NKJV)*

## **KEY BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR EPHESIANS**

To gain a better understanding of the Book of Ephesians, consider the following background information:

1. **Authorship:** The Apostle Paul - Traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul.
2. **Date of Writing:** A.D. 60-63 - Likely written around A.D. 60-63 during Paul's Roman imprisonment.
3. **Place of writing:** Rome – Paul wrote the book/letter of Ephesians from a Roman prison
4. **Audience:** Ephesian Christians at Ephesus and surrounding area Addressed to the Christian community in Ephesus, a major city in Asia Minor. Ephesians is considered a “circular letter” meant to be circulated to church in the area of Ephesus... possibly the same 7 churches
5. **Purpose:** How to live the Christian life To strengthen the faith of believers and address issues of unity and spiritual maturity.
6. **Themes:** Grace, the church, and holy living - Key themes include grace, the church as the body of Christ, and the importance of living a holy life.

7. **Structure: Ephesus is divided into two main sections** - Divided into two main sections: doctrinal teachings (chapters 1-3) and practical applications (chapters 4-6).
  8. **Cultural Context: Ephesus was center of commerce and religion** - Ephesus was a center of commerce and religion, known for the Temple of Artemis.
  9. **Significance: Mystery of the gospel and inclusion of Gentiles** - Emphasizes the mystery of the Gospel and the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan.
  10. **Spiritual Warfare: Ephesians' emphasis on the spiritual battle** - Concludes with a call to spiritual readiness and the armor of God (chapter 6).
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The idea of life as a “walk,” and especially the Christian life as “walk” is a common theme for the Apostle Paul in his letters. And he uses the term in both a positive and negative way. He uses the term in regard to both how a non-Christian and pre-Christian as well a Christian/believer live their life.

In Ephesians 5 Paul uses the term in a positive way, describing how a Christian ought to walk or live. Listen to his words in Ephesians 5:1-15 **(READ: Ephesians 5:1-16)**

*“<sup>1</sup> Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. <sup>3</sup> But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; <sup>4</sup> neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. <sup>5</sup> For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partakers with them. <sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), <sup>10</sup> finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. <sup>13</sup> But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. <sup>14</sup> Therefore He says: ‘Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.’ <sup>15</sup> See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, <sup>16</sup> redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” – Ephesians 5:1-16*

***What does the Christian walk consist of? (Explain each) What does the Christian walk not consist of? (Explain each)***

### **Application Questions**

1. How would you counsel a person who claimed to be born again and yet was living/walking as verse 19 describes?
2. How should a believer prioritize which biblical goals to pursue when there are so many?
3. I said that people are not agnostics due to intellectual problems, but due to moral problems. What implications does this have for witnessing?
4. How can a believer keep a tender conscience? Is it possible to have an overly sensitive conscience? Where's the balance?

Numerous polls over the years have shown that anywhere from one-third to almost one-half of Americans claim to be born again Christians. But before we celebrate, we should also note that the same polls indicate that there is no appreciable (noticeable) difference between the way that professing born again Christians live and how the rest of the culture lives.

- Christians, including Christian leaders, have an atrocious rate of sexual immorality, whether viewing pornography on the Internet or actually engaging in sexual sin (see *Leadership* [Winter, 1988], pp. 12, 24).
- Evangelical Christians actually have a slightly higher divorce rate than the rest of the American population!
- We watch the same amount and the same content of filthy TV shows and movies as the population at large.
- One researcher found that half of baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) claiming to be born again say that religions other than Christianity are equally good and true.

### **GENERATIONAL BREAKDOWN**

**Lost Generation = 1883 to 1900**  
**Greatest Generation = 1901 to 1927**  
**Silent Generation = 1928 to 1945**  
**Baby Boomers = 1946 to 1964**  
**Generation X = 1965 to 1980**  
**Millennial = 1981 to 1996**  
**Generation Z = 1997 to 2012**  
**Generation Alpha = 2013 to present**

- One-third of that group (baby boomers) believes in reincarnation and astrology.
- Nearly half of Christian baby boomers support abortion rights (Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*, reported in "The Watchman Expositor," vol. 18, # 1, 2001, p. 22).

- A 2001 survey indicated that two-thirds of adults who attend conservative, Protestant churches question whether absolute moral truth exists (cited by John MacArthur, *The Truth Wars* [Thomas Nelson], p. 216, from the barna.org web site)!

In light of these alarming conditions, Paul's words in Ephesians 4:17 scream at us, *"<sup>17</sup> 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."*

- *"This"* refers to what he is about to say.
- *"Therefore"* goes back to his exhortation in Ephesians 4:1, *"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called."*
- From Ephesians 4:4-16, he developed how the worthy walk pertains to church unity and maturity.
- Now, he turns to how the worthy walk affects personal holiness.
- *"Testify"* (*affirm*) means to testify as in court, when you summon a witness. It shows that Paul isn't giving some helpful hints that you may want to try if you feel like it. He is giving the Lord's commandments for how His people must live.
- *"In the Lord"* points to Paul's source of authority—the Lord Himself—and to the sphere in which both he and his readers now live. By God's mercy, they have been rescued from this present evil age and now live as new creatures in Christ.

Paul paints this graphic portrait of how unbelievers live, which is how the Ephesians had lived before they met Christ. It is a shorter version of a similar picture in *Romans 1:18-32*. Listen to it...

*"<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup> because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, <sup>21</sup> because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Professing to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. <sup>24</sup> Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup> who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. <sup>26</sup> For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. <sup>27</sup> Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. <sup>28</sup> And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; <sup>29</sup> being filled with all*

*unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, <sup>30</sup>backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup>undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; <sup>32</sup>who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” – Romans 1:18-32*

Paul is showing that when you become a Christian, there must be a distinct break from the past. People should be able to see clearly the difference in your life, so that they wonder, “What happened?” His message is quite simple:

### **Key Concept/Truth: Believers must not live as unbelievers live**

- In **verse 17** Paul makes a general statement about how unbelievers live, *“in the futility of their mind.”*
- In **verse 18**, he shows why they live this way. It is not easy to chart the relationship of the **four clauses** in **verse 18** (commentators differ). But the idea seems to be that...

#### **4 Clauses of Ephesians 4:18 / Why They Live in the Futility of Their Minds:**

- 1. The reason unbelievers live in the futility of their mind is that they are darkened in their understanding**
  - 2. Another reason unbelievers live in the futility of their minds is that they are alienated from the life of God**
  - 3. The reason they are alienated from the life of God is that deep within them, they are ignorant of God. They do not know Him.**
  - 4. The reason for this ignorance is that their hearts are hardened due to sin**
- Then in **verse 19**, he shows where this kind of futile lifestyle inevitably leads, namely, into giving themselves over to unbridled and insatiable sensuality and impurity.

Romans 1:21 seems to parallel our text where Paul says, *“<sup>21</sup>Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”*

He goes on to describe their plunge into moral degradation.

Our text reveals five ways that unbelievers live, that we must not follow. Paul describes them with the word *walk*. A walk is a way of life. A true Christian may fall into these behaviors on occasion, but they should not be characteristic of his lifestyle.

*“<sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup>having their understanding darkened,*

*being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;<sup>19</sup> who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” – Ephesians 4:17-19 (NKJV)*

### **5 Characteristics That Should NOT Mark a Christians Life/Walk:**

- (1) Don't live as unbeliever, who walk in the futility of their minds (Ephesians 4:17)**
- (2) Don't live as unbelievers, who walk in the darkness of their understanding (Ephesians 4:18)**
- (3) Don't live as unbelievers, who walk in alienation from the life of God (Ephesians 4:18)**
- (4) Don't live as unbelievers, who walk in spiritual ignorance due to hard hearts (Ephesians 4:18)**
- (5) Don't live as unbelievers, who walk in callused sensuality and insatiable moral impurity (Ephesians 4:19)**

Let's probe a little deeper in these characteristics that are NOT to be a part of our life and walk as believers (Christians)...

### **DON'T LIVE AS UNBELIEVERS, WHO WALK IN THE FUTILITY OF THEIR MINDS (Ephesians 4:17)**

*<sup>17</sup> 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.” – Ephesians 4:17*

- **“Futility”** is the same word that is used 36 times in Ecclesiastes (LXX) translated, *vanity*. **“‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher, ‘Vanity of vanities!’ All is vanity”** (Eccl. 1:2). It comes from a Hebrew word meaning *breath* or *vapor*.
- It refers to anything transitory, frail, or lacking in substance.
- Solomon had tried to find satisfaction through knowledge, through wealth and all that it affords, and through the pleasures of music and art and women. He had houses and lands with beautiful gardens and ponds. But none of it brought fulfillment. He observed that even if you have all of these things, you live a few years and then die. It is all futility, striving after the wind (Eccl. 2:17).
- We could picture a child chasing bubbles being blown into the air. He grabs one, but it bursts in his hand, leaving him with nothing.
- One early Christian writer gives examples of building houses of sand by the seashore, chasing the wind, shooting at the stars, or pursuing one's shadow (Gregory of Nyssa, cited by R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* [Eerdmans], p. 181). None of these activities results in anything of lasting value or significance.

Many unbelievers live for a purpose, even for noble purposes. Some aim to use their money for benevolent causes. Some want to find a cure for cancer or help others who are victims

of disease. Some want to go into politics so that they can help our country be a better place. Some want to teach children so that they can have a better life. These are all good purposes that benefit society. But, if they do not take God and eternity into consideration, what is gained? You live a few years and help a few people and then you die. Those who are helped may benefit for a few years before they die, or they may discard all that you have labored to get for them. Or, someone else may come along and undo everything that you have accomplished. It's all vanity or emptiness, unless it is done in light of God and eternity (1 Cor. 15:58).

Paul says that the futility of those without God exists in the *mind*. He is referring to their entire inner being, personality, or soul (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Darkness and Light* [Baker], p. 33). Paul emphasizes the mind in these verses: mind (4:17, 23); understanding, ignorance (4:18); learn (4:20); taught (4:21).

To live in the futility of the mind is to...

### **What does it mean to live in the futility of your mind?**

- (1) It means to think and live without any regard for God and eternity**
- (2) It is to live for selfish gratification or fleeting pleasure, without regard to the consequences, whether in this life or in eternity.**
- (3) It is to live according to the world's philosophies that leave God out - Philosophers speculate about this and that, but they don't have solid answers for life's problems in light of death and eternity.**

Paul is saying, "Don't live that way!"

- Don't live as if God did not exist.
- Don't live as if Christ had not died for your sins.
- Don't live as if there were no judgment or no heaven or no hell.
- Don't live in the futility of your mind.

You see it... don't live as if God doesn't exist!

**Albert Camus** was a **French philosopher, author, dramatist, journalist, world federalist,** and political **activist**. He was the recipient of the 1957 Nobel Prize in Literature... Although tragically an atheist he made this somewhat conflicting and somewhat interesting (yet I think sad statement)... Albert Camus said,

➔ ***"I would rather live my life as if there is a God and die to find out there isn't, than live as if there isn't and to die to find out that there is."* -Albert Camus** *(What is he saying and what is the problem with this statement? The first part is just sad... pointless! If you live as if there is God and then die to find out there is He is not going to let you into heaven based on how you live... your not going to be happy to find out there is one if you don't know Him)*

*What makes this such a tragic statement given it is being made by an atheist?*

**How to live as if God exists? (Enduring Word, “Act As If God Exists”)**

- (1) **To live as if God exists, one must engage in a conscious effort to seek the Kingdom of God – Seek and ye shall find!**
- (2) **To live as if God exists, trust that God will provide all that is needed – If you are genuinely seeking God, He will make Himself known**
- (3) **To live as if God exists, involves focusing on spiritual growth – Think of this... How do we grow spiritually?**
- (4) **To live as if God exists, concerns living in the presence of God -**
- (5) **To live as if God exists, includes a continuous process that requires commitment to action that is more than just a casual mental assent – Or going through the motions!**

➔ Let me be very practical. If you want to avoid living in the futility of your mind, think often about your death. Join **Jonathan Edwards**, who as a young man resolved, among many other things, **“I resolve to think much, on all occasions, of my dying, and of the common circumstances which attend death”** (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards* [Banner of Truth], 1:xx). ***Why do you think he said and why would he make this his resolution?***

You may think that that is morbid, but it is a vital principle for wise living! Then, keeping the shortness of life in view, join Moses in praying in **Psalm 90:21, “So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.”** ***Why is this so wise?*** In light of standing before God and in light of what you know of His Word, how do you want to spend the fleeting years that the Lord gives you? When you look back from the end, what do you want to have accomplished in light of eternity?

Then, in light of these godly purposes...

- Prayerfully think through and write down some goals that will move you in that direction this week - These will vary depending on where you’re at right now.
- Maybe establishing a regular time alone with God in the Word and in prayer is where you need to start.
- If some besetting sin trips you up, devise a practical, biblically based plan to overcome that sin.
- Review and revise these goals from time to time.
- Don’t just drift through life as unbelievers do, living for the next momentary pleasure.
- Don’t live in the futility of your mind.
- Live with godly purpose in light of eternity.

**DON’T LIVE AS UNBELIEVERS, WHO WALK IN THE DARKNESS OF THEIR UNDERSTANDING (Ephesians 4:18)**

*“<sup>18</sup>Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” -Ephesians 4:18*

This idea is similar to that of living in the futility of their mind, but it goes further in explaining why they live that way: their understanding is darkened.

### **Some Unpleasant Truths We Need to Remember and Know:**

**(1) Unbelievers (all of us at one time were) are darkened in their understanding** - When man sinned, it plunged the human race into mental darkness and alienation from God. People’s minds were cut off from knowing God. They became incapable of reasoning through things from God’s perspective. They were not able to understand spiritual truth according to...

- *John 8:43-47, “<sup>43</sup> Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. <sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. <sup>45</sup> But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. <sup>46</sup> Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? <sup>47</sup> He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.”*
- *As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “The god of this world (Satan) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*
- *Or in 1 Corinthians 2:14, “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”*
- *Or, as we saw in Romans 1:21, “their foolish hearts were darkened.”* When sin came into this world, the lights went out spiritually.

**(2) We are responsible for our own spiritual darkness** - Even though we inherited this spiritual darkness from Adam, we are responsible for it. We can’t blame Adam! We can’t blame God, who decreed that Adam’s sin would be imputed to the entire human race. If you say, “That’s not fair,” you are sinning with incredible arrogance to accuse the Sovereign of the universe of being unfair! And, the fact is, if you had been in the garden instead of Adam, you would have done the same thing that he did. So, each person is responsible for his own spiritual darkness.

**(3) We loved darkness more than light** - Not only are unbelievers darkened in their understanding, but also they love it! Jesus said (John 3:19-20), “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.” So the biblical picture is not that sinners are crying out, “O, if only I could see!” No, they’re partying in the dark and don’t want the light to expose their sin.

Paul says, “Don’t live that way! Don’t walk around with a darkened understanding!” To put it positively John says in 1 John 1:7, “*walk in the Light, as He Himself is in the Light.*” Again, Paul is referring to the understanding, to how you think. How do we walk in the light as He is in the light and avoid walking/living in darkness? Here are some helps in that direction...

### **How we may avoid a dark walk and attend to a light walk?**

- (1) Pursue a **renewed and transformed mind** - As a Christian, you need to be renewed and transformed in your mind (Eph. 4:23; Rom. 12:2) through God’s Word.
- (2) **Hold to and grow in sound doctrine** - Sound doctrine about God, man, sin, salvation, and every area of life is the foundation for spiritual understanding and light
- (3) **Think critically and be a biblical thinker** - Become a biblical thinker about every issue that you face, whether how to relate to others, how to manage your time and money, or how to act on the job

### **DON’T LIVE AS UNBELIEVERS, WHO WALK IN ALIENATION FROM THE LIFE OF GOD (Ephesians 4:18)**

*“<sup>18</sup>Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” -Ephesians 4:18*

Being “*alienated from the life of God*” further explains why unbelievers walk in the futility of their minds.

### **Why unbelievers/non-Christians walk in futility of their minds?**

- (1) They are **dead in their sins** – That’s all they know to do! Ephesians 2:1 says, “*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*”
- (2) They **lack new life from God** – Paul tell us in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “*<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” When we come to Him and are saved he give us new life and make us a new creature. But prior to that we lack new life from God, as a matter of fact we are devoid of life, but “dead” in trespasses and sins

Becoming a Christian is not a matter of eliminating sinful behavior and replacing it with moral behavior, although that will follow. Becoming a Christian is a matter of receiving new life from God. As Jesus said (John 3:16), whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, along with some others, formed a club at Oxford called “The Holy Club.” Through self-denial, discipline, good works, and reading and studying their Greek New Testaments and other books, these

young men sought to be holy. But it all stemmed from human effort. None of these young men were born again at that time.

Then, George Whitefield read a little book, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, written in the previous century by a young Scotsman, Henry Scougal. Whitefield said that by that book, “God showed me that I must be born again, or be damned! I learned that a man may go to church, say his prayers, receive the sacrament, and yet not be a Christian. How did my heart rise and shudder, like a poor man that is afraid to look into his account-books, lest he should find himself a bankrupt.” (Cited in Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield* [Cornerstone Books], 1:73.) Whitefield thought of throwing that book away, but instead he searched it more and asked God to make him a real Christian. He came to realize that being a true Christian involves “a union of the soul with God, and Christ formed within us” (*ibid.*). It was the first time that he realized that he must become a new creature.

After a lot more effort and agony of soul, he finally came to reject all self-trust and cast himself on the mercy of God through Christ. He said, “God was pleased to remove the heavy load, to enable me to lay hold of His dear Son by a living faith, and by giving me the Spirit of adoption, to seal me even to the day of everlasting redemption” (*ibid.*, p. 77). After that, God used George Whitefield’s preaching to bring many from empty religion to new life in Jesus Christ.

Paul is saying to us, “Don’t live as unbelievers do, being excluded from the life of God.” Make sure that you have eternal life through genuine faith in Jesus Christ!

### **DON’T LIVE AS UNBELIEVERS, WHO WALK IN SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE DUE TO HARD HEARTS (Ephesians 4:18)**

*“<sup>18</sup>Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” -Ephesians 4:18*

The phrase, “because of the ignorance that is in them,” explains why unbelievers are alienated from the life of God. They do not know God personally.

- “Ignorance” translates the Greek word from which we get our word, *agnostic*.
- It means to be without knowledge.
- It is ironic that agnostics often boast of their great knowledge, as if it were their knowledge that led them to their “enlightened” state of not knowing if there is a God!
- But, Paul traces their spiritual ignorance to something else, namely, to “the hardness of their heart.” (The KJV wrongly translates it, “blindness,” but the word means, “hardness,” as in a stone.)

### **3 Truth About the Person Who is Hard of Heart:**

- (1) The person who is hard of heart ignores God and His commands –
- (2) The person who is hard of heart refuses to bow before God as the Sovereign Lord
- (3) The person who is hard of heart results in not knowing God and is cut off from Him  
- That spiritual ignorance due to sin is why unbelievers are cut off from the very life of God.

Pastor/teacher, Dr. Stephen Cole says, ***“People are not agnostics because they have intellectual problems with the Bible. Rather, they are agnostics because of moral rebellion against God.” -Dr. Stephen Cole***

***What do you think he means by that statement?*** They want to live as they please, not as God commands. In order to justify and excuse their sinful lifestyle, they have to get rid of God. So, they claim that they have intellectual problems with the existence of God. They may use evolution or the problem of evil and suffering in the world, or whatever. But get through the smokescreen and behind it you will find sin. They do not want to acknowledge the existence of God because they know that they are in big trouble if He exists!

When you’re talking with such a person and he throws at you some intellectual objection to the gospel, ask him, “Are you saying that if I can give you a reasonable answer to that problem, you would follow Jesus Christ as Lord?” Invariably, he will say, “Well, no, there are a lot more problems.” But keep pushing him and the real problem will become evident: he does not want to submit to Jesus as Lord. He loves his sin!

Paul says, “Don’t live that way!” As a believer, be seeking daily to know the living God in a more intimate way. Submit every area of your life to Him. Don’t let sin harden your heart and produce doubts and spiritual ignorance. Finally,

### **DON’T LIVE AS UNBELIEVERS, WHO WALK IN CALLUSED SENSUALITY AND INSATIABLE MORAL IMPURITY (Ephesians 4:19)**

***“<sup>19</sup>Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” – Ephesians 4:19***

Verse 19 describes the final result of this downward spiral into sin. He says, the become ***“past feeling”*** or callous. To become callous means to cease to feel pain; thus, spiritually, it is to “lose the capacity to feel shame or embarrassment” (Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* [Eerdmans/Apollos], p. 322).

The first time a person commits a sin, he thinks, “I’ll just do it this once.” But, after he does it, his conscience bothers him. He feels guilty. But, the next time, it’s a bit easier. He rationalizes it by thinking, “Well, others do worse!” Each time, it becomes easier to sin as

his conscience develops a spiritual callus. Finally, he gives himself over to sin with abandon. He has no shame about it. In fact, he goes on TV talk shows to boast about it!

In Romans 1:24, 26, 28, there is the repeated frightening phrase, “*God gave them over.*” But here, they “*have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.*” It is describing the same thing from the sinner’s perspective.

- “*Lewdness*” (or *sensuality*) refers to a person who casts off all restraint and has no regard even for public decency. It is to be openly, shamelessly in violation of God’s moral standards.
- “*uncleanness with greediness*” probably refers to an insatiable appetite for sexual sin.
- “*Giving them over to...*” has the nuance of making an occupation out of impurity!

Pursuing sensuality and greed feeds on itself, because what once was new, exciting, and pleasurable soon becomes boring and unfulfilling. So the sinner has to seek new depths of perversion. Like using drugs, giving yourself over to sensuality and impurity becomes enslaving.

Paul says, “Don’t live like that!” Jesus said that we must cut off such sin as we would cut off our hand or pluck out our eye (Matt. 5:29-30). Keep your conscience tender towards God! Do not give yourself over to sin. It never satisfies and it always enslaves!

## CONCLUSION

Some of you may be thinking, “Paul is being kind of extreme here. I know many unbelievers who don’t fit his dire description in these verses. They are decent, moral people. They are faithful in their marriages. They love their children. They are responsible to work and pay their bills. They’re good neighbors. So, how does what Paul says here apply to them?”

Consider two things in closing...

### **2 Concluding Comments to Remember:**

- (1) **In His grace, God restrains people from being as bad as they possibly could be** - If God let all sinners go, the human race would have self-destructed centuries ago. The doctrine of “total depravity” does not mean that people are as bad as they can be. Rather, it means that sin has tainted every part of our being. It corrupts our minds, our emotions, our will, and our bodies. But because of His grace, God restrains the evil of the fallen human heart, so that unbelievers may be kind, loving, and responsible people.
- (2) **God looks not only on the outward behavior, but also on the heart** - God’s assessment when He looked on the wickedness of the human race just before the flood was (Gen. 6:5), “*every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*” After the flood, God’s assessment did not change. He said (Gen. 8:21), “*for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth.*” As Jeremiah 17:9 puts it, “*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?*”

If God were to let any one of us go, indwelling sin would impel us toward all manner of evil and corruption. We should not look on someone who fits the description of verse 19 and say, "How can he do that?" Rather, we should look at our text/passage and say,

***"There but for the grace of God, am I!"*** *What does that mean and how might that apply here?*

So, even as believers, we must get into the habit of instantly judging our own sin on the heart level. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind through God's Word and you will not live as unbelievers live.